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General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2012, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am privileged to address this body once again. I join with those who have gone before me in congratulating Mr. Vuk Jeremić on assuming the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. We find ourselves in challenging times. The work ahead of us during this session reflects those challenges. I am confident, however, that, under his able leadership, this Organization will continue its work to improve the quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular those who are most vulnerable.

Let me also take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the commendable leadership of his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, during the most recent session of the General Assembly.

I also recognize the unwavering dedication of our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. With his hand on the tiller, he continues to steer our Organization through the complex realities and challenges facing our world today towards our objectives. In particular, I would like to acknowledge with deep appreciation his personal commitment to the issue of climate change and the plight of the most vulnerable. We in Kiribati welcomed the Secretary-General to our country last year, during the first visit ever by anyone in his position to our part of the world. We were grateful for the opportunity to show him firsthand the challenges of living on the front lines of climate change.

In the President's opening statement yesterday (see A/67/PV.6), he reminded us that the core function of the Organization is the maintenance of peace and security. It is important that we all reflect on what we have done as individuals to achieve a more peaceful, secure and better world. We must ask ourselves if what we are doing is in the collective interest of all the peoples of this world or of just a select few. We must look at our efforts as leaders of this global family and ask ourselves if we are doing the right thing for our children and their children.

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I firmly believe that, with all the information available to us today, we should know exactly what needs to be done. We know what we have to do but, for whatever reason, we lack the courage, the fortitude and the vision to do it. We lack a sense of responsibility for each other. We are not willing to step out of our comfort zone and make the necessary sacrifices for the security and future of all members of our international community.

It is never too late to do the right thing. History shows many examples where global action has resulted in global good. We have managed to secure a relatively more peaceful world. We have been able to address some of the major injustices of the past. We have come together to face down those who seek to achieve their objectives through terrorist means. However, we must remain vigilant, as new and emerging forms of security threats and injustices are cropping up to threaten our global family.

This will be the seventh time I have had the honour to address the Assembly in my nine years as President of my country. Each time I have sought to convey the same message. Each time I have spoken of the real and existential threat to my nation. Each time I have reminded the Assembly of the need for urgent action to address climate change and sea level rise so as to ensure the long-term survival of nations like Kiribati.

I frequently find myself watching my grandchildren and wondering what sort of a future we shall be leaving them. For their sake, climate change is an issue that I will continue to talk about for as long as I have breath in my body. This is a critical issue for the survival of our people and for all of humanity. It remains the greatest moral challenge of our time.

Whether or not we are willing to acknowledge it, climate change and sea-level rise are the result of the unsustainable use of our planet's resources. Economic growth at all costs must not be our mantra, particularly when it is those who will benefit the least from this growth who will pay the ultimate price. The Earth is not ours to do with as we please. We are merely trustees for future generations, and we ignore this reality at their peril.

The Organization was founded on the fundamental principle of sovereign equality. Security issues affecting each of us must be given due recognition. We are grateful that the General Assembly agrees that climate change is a matter warranting the attention of the Security Council. I applaud the commitment of our Secretary-General to this particular security threat, but he needs the support of all nations to take the necessary action to address it.

We must step up our collective efforts to mitigate global greenhouse-gas emissions. We continue to urge major greenhouse-gas emitters to do their part. We also urge development partners to provide the appropriate level of resources and technology to enable us to deal with the current and future impacts of climate change and sea-level rise.

While we are taking adaptative measures to ensure that Kiribati remains habitable for as long as possible, we are also preparing for a future when our islands may no longer be able to sustain our population. We are looking to improve the skills of our people to a level where they will be able to compete for jobs in the international labour market. We want our people to have the option to migrate with dignity, should that be a necessary choice in the future, and all the science is telling us that that is a real possibility.

We note some positive progress made at the recent climate change talks in Bangkok, building on the decisions made in Durban last year. However, action has been too slow in coming. We inch along, when it is great strides that are needed. On those issues where we have consensus, we believe the international community must move to implement agreed action without delay, while we continue our discussions on those matters that remain contentious. If we wait for agreement on everything, then it is going to be a very long wait and a long process.

It should not come as a surprise that we are off-track on many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While other countries are focusing their resources on their efforts to meet the MDGs, we, the most vulnerable countries, continue to spend a disproportionate level of our limited resources fighting the onslaught of the rising seas and storm surges on our homes, livelihoods and public infrastructure. That is a costly exercise that we cannot afford. We continue to rely on the goodwill of our partners and members of our global community in that regard.

We are a nation of water. We are a very-large-ocean State. We believe that, given the right support, we can achieve sustainable development through the utilization of the available resources of our vast exclusive economic zone. We believe that, in so doing,

we can reduce our reliance on development assistance. I also believe that we may even be able to do away with development assistance altogether, if we are provided with the support we need now to develop our capacity to harvest and process our own resources.

Fisheries remain a major economic resource for my country, providing between 40 and 50 per cent of our revenue. Our aspiration is to maximize returns from that resource, given the current rate of return of between 5 and 8 per cent after landed value alone. We have started establishing our fish-processing plant through a public/private partnership. Seabed mining is another potential source of revenue. However, we are mindful of the need to take a precautionary approach towards that particular industry, given the potential damage it could cause to our pristine marine environment.

We acknowledge the fundamental role of our environment as a pillar of sustainable development. Maintaining the health and biodiversity of our oceans and ecosystems will be critical. Our contribution to those efforts is the Phoenix Islands Protected Area, which was once the world's largest marine protected area. We have set aside that area as a haven for marine biodiversity, and that is our gift to humanity in recognition of the value of protecting our common heritage.

Ocean conservation is beyond the resources of any single country. Collaboration on cross-border initiatives is therefore essential to advancing our efforts in that regard. At the recent Pacific Islands Forum meeting in the Cook Islands, the United States and Kiribati announced plans to collaborate in building links between our adjoining marine parks in the Phoenix Islands, under the umbrella of the Phoenix Ocean Arc. That effort is our joint contribution to the Pacific Oceanscape Framework. We want to take this opportunity to invite the international community to partner with us in that endeavour.

Our message to the international community is that conservation of biodiversity and marine ecosystems in the Pacific is not only important to the sustainable development of Pacific island people. It is also of vital importance to the rest of the global community. The international community needs to support those efforts, not as a hand-out but as an investment for this planet's future generations.

In June, we met in Rio de Janeiro to review our progress 20 years on from the 1992 Earth Summit. Twenty years ago, we agreed that the protection of our global environment was critical for our future survival and that the pursuit of development must be based on the long-term sustainability of our natural resources. Unfortunately, our track record in delivering on our undertakings has not been good. In fact, in many respects, our environment is worse off today than it was 20 years ago. The fine balance keeping our planetary ecosystem together has been adversely affected by our pursuit of individual benefits at the expense of the collective good. While some members of our global family continue to benefit from the unsustainable exploitation of resources, others are having to pay the ultimate price. We do not believe that there is justice in that.

We renewed our commitment in June to achieving the future we want. That future will require our Organization to evolve to reflect the realities of our time, a time in which new and emerging security threats and injustices, such as climate change, are challenging the credibility of our international system of governance; a time in which the future survival of some nations is seriously in question; and a time when all those countries with the ability to do so must contribute to the prevention of such a calamity or be forever judged by history. If we are to provide a secure, peaceful and prosperous future for our children, then we must go beyond business as usual and deliver now. In fact, we should have delivered yesterday.

We accept the reality that, during these uncertain times, there is a need for the United Nations to remain as relevant and responsive as possible to the ever-changing needs and challenges of this world. In our discussions earlier this morning, I was most encouraged to be assured by the Secretary-General's commitment to ensuring that our Organization will undergo reforms in order to become more efficient, more transparent and more accountable. We also welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to strengthen partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

In fact, I believe that such a partnership must begin at the community and national levels before extending to the regional and international levels.

The fundamental fabric that binds us together as a family and as humanity is unravelling at the seams. Maintaining security and ensuring the survival of people in conflict areas, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, remain a major challenge to our Organization. Let us pray for the sake of those on the

front line of the major global challenges that a greater understanding and stability will prevail.

It is gratifying to note the continued easing of tension and the improvement of relations across the Taiwan Straits. We also welcome the inclusion of countries such as Taiwan in the international activities of the World Health Assembly. We hope that a similar understanding will prevail in respect of other international institutions and processes so that Taiwan can participate and contribute meaningfully for the good of humanity.

As we chart the path towards the future that we want, we must address the fundamental threats to the very existence of the members of this family of nations. As a family, we must guarantee the survival of the members of our community. Climate change must be resolved before it is too late for those countries on the front line and, indeed, the whole of humanity.

We need compassionate, visionary and responsible leadership at this time in order to direct our path towards a more secure and just future. We owe it to our children and their children's children to act and act soon. So let us pray that God will give us the common sense to do the right thing for the future of humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: On behalf of my delegation and myself, may I extend to Mr. Jeremić our warmest congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. His extensive experience in both regional and international affairs will undoubtedly enrich the debate and the proceedings during this session. I wish to assure him of the full cooperation of Zimbabwe as he discharges the onerous duties of that high office.

If I may be allowed, I would like to preface my speech with a reference to the most glowing and moving speech that we heard from the President of the United States yesterday (see A/67/PV.6), the significance of which was to get us to condemn the tragic death of the United States Ambassador to Libya. I am sure that we were all moved and that we all agree that it was, indeed, an appalling event that we all condemn.

A year ago, we saw the barbaric and brutal death of the Head of State of Libya, which is a member of the African Union. His death occurred in a context in which NATO was operating supposedly in order to protect civilians. As we join the United States in spirit in condemning the Ambassador's death, will the United States also join us in condemning the barbaric death of the Head of State of Libya, Al-Qadhafi?

That great and tragic loss to Africa occurred in circumstances in which NATO had sought the authority of the Security Council under Chapter VII to operate in Libya in the protection of civilians, who were said to be at the mercy of the Government of Libya, led by Colonel Al-Qadhafi. The mission was strictly to protect civilians, but it became a brutal hunt for Al-Qadhafi and his family. NATO caught up with them. Al-Qadhafi and some of his children suffered the brutal deaths about which we know.

As the United States President spoke, I am sure that that he was aware that his country, as a NATO Power, had, alongside the other NATO Powers, the authority under Chapter VII to operate in Libya in order to protect civilians. But is that what the operation turned out to be? In a very dishonest manner, we saw the authority entrusted under Chapter VII being used as a weapon in order to rout a whole family and to commit the murders that occurred in that country. Bombs were hurled in a callous manner. Quite a number of civilians died. Was that the protection they had sought under Chapter VII of the Charter? So the death of Al-Qadhafi must be seen in the same tragic vein as the death of Chris Stevens. We condemn both.

Let me begin by reaffirming the rightful and important role of the United Nations in the management of issues affecting international peace and security. In the quest for a more just and equitable international order, Zimbabwe remains strongly opposed to unilateralism and committed to multilateralism. We would therefore like to see a United Nations that continues to be a guarantor of world peace and security and a bulwark in the fight for justice and equality among nations. It behoves us all, therefore, to take the necessary steps to ensure that the United Nations is not marginalized on international issues.

Equally important, the United Nations must, in future, never allow itself to be abused, as it was in the case I referred to earlier, when NATO sought under Chapter VII authority to protect civilians, but it did not turn out to be that. In the future, the Security Council must never allow itself to be abused by any Member State or group of States that seeks to achieve parochial, partisan goals. The Charter of the United Nations clearly stipulates that it is an international body that should work for the good of all the peoples of the world, big and small.

We recognize that there are existing and emerging threats and challenges that continue to frustrate our individual and collective efforts to attain greater economic development and social progress, as well as peace and security. But the increasing trend among the NATO member States, inspired by the arrogant belief that they are the most powerful among us — demonstrated in their recent resort to unilateralism and military hegemony in Libya — is the very antithesis of the basic principles of the United Nations. In the case of Libya, the African Union and its peacemaking role was defied, ignored and humiliated. The African Union sought dialogue between the Libyan authorities and the so-called revolutionaries. May we urge the international community to collectively nip this dangerous and unwelcome aggressive development in the bud before it festers.

In that regard, the theme that the President has chosen for this session — "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means" — is very appropriate. This is what we in the African Union stress — the settlement of disputes in a peaceful way, through dialogue. The warmongers of our world have done us enough harm. Wherever they have imposed themselves, chaos in place of peace has been the result. One example was the situation created by the Bush-Blair illegal campaign in Iraq — an illegal campaign undertaken because it was alleged that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, when it was well known to those two and their Governments that he did not have such weapons — and, indeed, after invading Iraq, creating much havoc and getting rid of Saddam Hussein, they admitted that he had no weapons of mass destruction. So why had they attacked Iraq in the first place? Why did they seek to get rid of Saddam Hussein? Was it merely because he was a dictator, as they alleged? No, he was the head of a country that sat on tons and tons of oil. It was oil they required, and we saw companies — indeed, one such company was headed by a brother of Bush — rushing to suck oil from Iraq.

That is also what happened with Libya. The situation they created in Iraq has now brought about greater instability than there ever was. We have Sunnis rising against Shias, and vice versa, let alone the disastrous economic consequences of that unlawful invasion. The economy is unstable, society unstable, and people are fighting one another. Libya has been made equally unstable after NATO's deceitful intervention under the sham cover of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the phony principle of the responsibility to protect. I listened to the speech made by the Secretary-General. He made reference to that principle. It is one that can be abused, and it has been abused. And, anyway, it is still being debated.

Zimbabwe firmly believes in the peaceful settlement of disputes between and among States in a manner that is consistent with the principles and purposes of the United Nations. In the maintenance of international peace and security, much more must be done to prevent conflicts from erupting in the first place, and to prevent relapses once a situation has been stabilized. Beyond deploying adequate resources for managing conflicts, it is important to address their underlying causes, and to pursue, more proactively, a comprehensive approach focusing on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peace-maintenance and development. In pursuing thst cause, my delegation strongly believes that adherence to the Charter of the United Nations should be a solemn obligation of all Member States.

We have noticed, with deep regret, that the provisions of the United Nations Charter dealing with the peaceful settlement of disputes have, on occasion, been ignored by the Security Council. In contrast, there appears to be an insatiable appetite for war,

embargoes, sanctions and other punitive actions, even on matters that are better resolved through multilateral cooperation and dialogue. Instead of resorting to the peaceful resolution of disputes, we are daily witnessing a situation where might is now right. We have said, "Well, yes, those who are powerful might hang on the principle that might is right", but certainly right is also might.

We need to take stock of the inspiring Preamble to the United Nations Charter, where the plenipotentiaries who met in San Francisco in 1945 undertook to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". That is especially pertinent at present, when global events represent a radical departure from that solemn and noble San Francisco declaration. What do the NATO alliance members have to say about that, one may ask.

It is therefore important that the Security Council should respect and support the decisions, processes and priorities of regional organizations. In contrast, recent events — as has already been stated — particularly with reference to Africa, have demonstrated the scant regard that the United Nations and certain powerful members of the international community give to the pivotal role of regional organizations. Effective cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations will become viable and sustainable only when developed on the basis of mutual respect and support, as well as on shared responsibility and commitment.

It is regrettable to note that certain unacceptable concepts are currently being foisted on the United Nations membership in the absence of intergovernmental mandates. For instance, there is no agreement yet on the concept of the responsibility to protect, especially with respect to the circumstances under which it might be invoked. We are concerned by the clear and growing evidence that the concept of responsibility to protect has begun to be applied and seriously abused, thus inevitably compromising and undermining the cardinal principle of the sovereignty of States and the United Nations Charter principles of territorial integrity and non-interference in the domestic affairs of countries.

For the international community to successfully deal with global economic, social, security and environmental challenges, the existence of international institutions to handle them and a culture of genuine multilateralism are critical. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and international financial institutions are the only instruments available for responding effectively to the global challenges we face in the global village. It is therefore critical that those structures be reformed and realigned in response to both global challenges and our contemporary realities, in order to enable them to better serve our collective interests.

This Assembly is the most representative organ within the United Nations family. We must therefore dedicate ourselves to finding consensus on measures to revitalize it so that it fulfils its mandate in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. We wish to reiterate our deep concern that the mandate, powers and jurisdiction of the General Assembly are shrinking as a consequence of the Security Council's gradual encroachment on the Assembly's areas of competence. That, in our view, upsets the delicate balance envisaged under the Charter and undermines the overall effectiveness of the United Nations system. The General Assembly must remain the main deliberative, policy-making organ of the United Nations.

We have been seized with the debate on the reform of the Security Council for far too long. My delegation fully supports the current intergovernmental negotiations on the reform and expansion of the Council. However, we wish to caution against an open-ended approach that short-changes those of us from regions that are not represented at all among the permanent membership of the Council. Zimbabwe stands by Africa's demand for two permanent seats, complete with a veto if the veto is to be retained, plus two additional non-permanent seats, as clearly articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

For how long will the international community continue to ignore the aspirations of a whole continent of 54 countries? We shall not be bought off with empty promises, nor shall we accept some cosmetic tinkering with the Security Council disguised as reform. It is indeed a travesty of justice that the African continent, which accounts for almost a third of the membership represented in this Assembly, has no permanent representation in the Council. Is that good governance? Is that democracy? And is that justice?

My delegation condemns unreservedly the economic sanctions imposed against my country and people in an unjustified effort to deny them the chance to fully benefit from their natural resource endowment. We wish to remind those who have maintained sanctions against us that there is international consensus — fully supported by the Southern African Development

Community, the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the rest of the progressive world — that these sanctions must go. We hope they will go.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming Zimbabwe's commitment to the principles that have brought us together in the United Nations for the last 67 years. My country is confident that in this inextricably interdependent world, our commitment to the common good, which the Organization embodies, will be resolute and enduring. Zimbabwe will continue to stand firm and to condemn unilateralism, the imposition of unwarranted and illegal sanctions on nations and the unwarranted extraterritorial application of national laws.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martelly (*spoke in French*): I come here to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly to bring, on behalf of the Haitian people, my contribution to the debate that today brings together representatives of all peoples of the world.

The election of Mr. Jeremić to the Assembly presidency is for me a clear message that the small States Members of the United Nations can play a major role and make their contribution to peace, even in the global context of a sluggish economy. On behalf of the Haitian delegation, I would like to congratulate him for having raised and encouraged the theme for today's debate, which, unfortunately, is a concern of many Members of the great family of the United Nations.

Also permit me to pay a well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the dynamism, wisdom, good judgement, vision and courage he has shown more than once in managing extremely sensitive international situations. I also would like to especially thank him for the particular attention he has bestowed on my country, Haiti.

Since my accession to power, the Haiti I love has attempted, in intent and in deeds — with many ups and downs, no doubt with successes and some mistakes — to emerge from its difficulties. I have been strongly dedicated to that effort. I can imagine that, with the impetus provided, results will be forthcoming in a matter of months or years. How could it be otherwise? Haiti today, the Haiti that I have the mission of serving, has understood that as long as there are quarrels, frustrations, poverty, underdevelopment and inequality, the world in general and Haiti in particular will never be protected from problems and controversies. As long as things are bad within nations, they will be tempted to turn to their neighbours and seek quarrels. Throughout long centuries of world history examples have not been lacking. That is why we say today that, while it is good to seek peaceful solutions to international disputes, it would perhaps be wiser to try to prevent them.

As long as access to water and to major markets, or just compensation for raw materials and sound economic competitiveness are not available to us, we will continue to have conflicts. As long as we at the United Nations do not pool our efforts so that access to health and to jobs and respect for differences become a reality, we will continue to face conflicts, and we will be reduced to painfully seeking peaceful solutions.

We champion gender equality and we promote democracy. We daily attempt to apply equal treatment for all under the law. Respect for the environment is inscribed in our programme of Government. In my view, those are the parameters that prevent uncontrolled migrations, climate change, useless wars, religion-related massacres, ethnic conflicts and terrorism.

In our common quest for harmony in a world with different cultures and diverse religions, we must allow our national dreams to emerge. Those dreams can be summed up as offering the possibility to every man and every woman, regardless of color, religion or political

preference, to live in peace and to rear their children in dignity.

The Haiti of Toussaint Louverture, over two centuries ago, already understood that. Those national dreams, however, will not see the light of day if the commitments made to help the development of countries like ours are not implemented, if prejudice and suspicions of all kinds regarding the have-nots still prevail. In order to prevent those differences, we must regard others in a different way, with eyes purified, I would say, at the Pool of Siloam. Haiti continues to suffer from being regarded in the old way.

On the eve of Haiti's presidency of the Caribbean Community, I repeat that with good faith and goodwill, things can change, because our destinies, whatever side we may be on, are intimately intertwined. In a world where the global trend is towards the forming of economic and social blocs, the great can remain great only if they know how to transform the multiplicity of children of the planet into a single great social and economic family, respectful of the cultural and religious traditions of all, without exclusion.

Therefore the necessary dialogue must prevail among us, not the dialogue of the deaf in which we have been powerlessly enmeshed for decades. We must have real exchanges and negotiations that alone can put an end to the interminable conflicts, which have brought families grief and disrupted the peace of the world.

History has taught us that there is no justice or equality in international relations. History has also taught us that every nation looks after its own interests. The establishment of the United Nations kindled hope among peoples that things could be different. We cannot let that flame die. Within any family in general and within the family of the United Nations in particular, there cannot be great and small, giants and dwarfs, but equal beings with interests to defend and opinions to express on the basis of forward-looking relationships, relationships marked by liberty, equality, fraternity and the pursuit of happiness for all.

But let us not be misled: the best foundation for peace in the world, for prosperity and for defeating poverty will always be democracy. Under my leadership, Haiti has understood that and is making active use of democracy to strengthen previously weak or ineffectual local institutions. Haiti has understood that only veritable democracy can bring stability: it is the indispensable precondition for any development policy.

I wish to sincerely reiterate from this rostrum the urgent need we all must face to stop fighting and to work instead to protect the assets we share on this planet — to work together to reduce and manage the risks and disasters besetting the world, ruining our economies and hindering development.

To my colleagues, the leaders of the world, I wish to recall that our respective peoples have chosen us and entrusted to us the mandate of building a better world where no one will be left alone, where our children will finally be able to grow up in peace.

The words of Victor Hugo come to mind, pronounced at the Peace Congress in 1847: "The day will come when there will be no battlefields other than markets open to trade and minds open to ideas."

Those are my wishes for the assembly of nations. May the good Lord give us His blessings and enlighten us. May He bless the city of New York, which is receiving us so warmly, and grant us the wisdom and capacity to work towards a more beautiful and more just world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bērziņš: I commend the Secretary-General for his immense efforts in leading the United

Nations and its Secretariat to fulfil its mission and implement the tasks with which the Organization is charged. The theme of this session is very timely. The United Nations plays a leading role in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. It possesses the legal and institutional framework to do so.

States Members of the United Nations have committed themselves to the principles contained in the Charter. The peaceful settlement of disputes therefore primarily depends on the determination of the national and international leaders. Only if they are determined can the United Nations and other international organizations and institutions arrive at decisions and take action.

Let me speak about some concrete challenges that require strong will and decisive action by the international community. The conflict in Syria threatens security and stability in the whole region and beyond. Latvia urges all members of the Security Council to find the political will to unite and resolve that crisis. The lives of innocent people must be protected.

The risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of the most serious global threats. The international community should be united in its commitment to prevent it. Latvia is seriously concerned about the potential use of Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons.

We deplore the lack of progress in dialogue with Iran on the nature of its nuclear programme. We believe that its full cooperation to clarify all outstanding questions is needed.

We call for strengthening the efforts to reach the goals of the the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its action plan. In that regard, we applaud the steps taken by the United States and Russia towards global disarmament and transparency. We hope that they will trigger further efforts to reduce the reliance on nuclear weapons.

Latvia also welcomes the consensus outcome of the second Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We should redouble our efforts to find solutions on the Arms Trade Treaty as soon as possible.

Latvia welcomes the increasingly active role played by regional organizations such as the African Union and the League of Arab States in the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

European regional organizations have also been actively working towards the resolution of protracted conflicts in the wider Europe. We see a positive trend towards a political settlement in Transnistria, Republic of Moldova. However, only with progress on the withdrawal of foreign troops will any settlement be sustainable. A multinational peacekeeping mission with an international mandate could be a rational way forward.

The consequences of the conflict in Georgia in 2008 will have a long-lasting effect on the security situation in the region. The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia is presently the only international player that monitors the implementation of the six-point agreement. Gaining actual access to the occupied territories would contribute to lasting progress. In addition, the restoration of a meaningful presence of the United Nations in Georgia is needed.

We remain concerned about the increasing number of incidents at the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflicting sides should abstain from hostile public rhetoric and should concentrate on confidence-building measures. The conduct of major military exercises in that volatile region should be avoided.

Afghanistan has been at the centre of the world's attention for much more than a decade. We believe that the international community is fully committed to assisting the Afghan Government in strengthening its public administration and the National Security Forces.

Latvia will continue its involvement in the European Union (EU) and NATO missions in Afghanistan. We also intend to participate in the missions after 2014. In addition, Latvia will provide a financial contribution to the international fund in support of the Atghan National Security Forces.

The future of Afghanistan is closely linked to economic development and regional cooperation. We encourage the full engagement of the Central Asian countries in discussions on the region's future. Afghanistan has the potential to become a regional hub for transportation and transit. Using our experience as an entry point to the Northern Distribution Network, Latvia is already engaged in training Afghan experts in the areas of transportation and anti-drug trafficking.

The global economic and financial crisis has focused leaders' attention on immediate measures to overcome it, often diverting their attention from long-

term global challenges. The world economy remains fragile, even if some positive trends can be observed. Latvia welcomes all efforts to stabilize the situation in the eurozone and supports recent steps in that regard. We are working hard to be part of the solution and to become a net contributor to global economic stability.

Latvia's own gross national product grew more than 5.5 per cent in 2011. That positive trend is set to continue in 2012. Over the past decade, we have achieved significant progress with respect to both income and structural convergence. The quality of governance and economic structures in Latvia is comparable to that of the member countries of the Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Looking to the OECD's expected enlargement, Latvia is ready to offer its experience with transition and with the kind of decisive reforms that are leading us to recovery from the recent crisis.

Overall, Latvia has emerged from the downturn stronger and more competitive, with a balanced economy and a positive business environment that positions us well for the next growth cycle. Above all, the sustainability of economic health must go hand in hand with the process of incorporation into the eurozone. Latvia believes that the challenges can be overcome and aims to introduce the euro in 2014.

International peace and security are closely linked with two other pillars of the United Nations, namely, development and human rights. Latvia welcomes the establishment of the high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda. We are pleased that the EU's Commissioner for Development, Mr. Andris Piebalgs of Latvia, will contribute to the panel's work.

The current framework of the Millennium Development Goals has revitalized global action on development and improved its effectiveness. Latvia's EU presidency in 2015 will evaluate the progress achieved and contribute actively to the agreement on post-2015 framework, which should remain people-centred, focused, time-bound and simple.

In recent years we have witnessed a growing number of people in many countries demanding freedom and justice. The international community must support their aspirations. We must help build stable democratic institutions and establish the rule of law. We believe that respect for human rights, good governance and inclusive economic development will help to prevent future conflicts.

Latvia participates in capacity-building in several conflict and post-conflict countries. We actively support nations in transition in their efforts to strengthen the rule of law. We welcome the fact that those issues are now part of the Secretary-General's five-year Action Agenda and we are committed to their implementation.

Latvia believes that economic and social development will benefit from the introduction of the principles of open Government. Civil society in Latvia actively participates in the decision-making process at all stages and levels.

Latvia fully supports the work of a strong and effective Human Rights Council. We have put forward our candidacy for the elections to the Council in 2014.

In order to keep pace with the modern world, the United Nations needs to change. The time has come to start real negotiations on reforming the Security Council. We support the enlargement of the Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent membership categories. Any enlargement of the Council should include at least one new non-permanent seat for the Eastern European Group.

The world is going through a period of turbulence, as shown by recent violent events in the Middle East.

We strongly condemn the attacks on diplomatic missions in several countries as unacceptable. Latvia fully supports the freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully. We deplore any attempts to use religion to fuel extremism and violence. Tolerance and respect for our differences are the key to preventing conflicts and violence, both in our communities and internationally.

Finally, Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Let us address the challenges with true political will.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales Ayma (*spoke in Spanish*): The meetings we hold at the United Nations are always very important events at which we debate social, environmental, political and economic issues throughout the world. I commend the President of the General Assembly on having chosen as our central theme the peaceful settlement of disputes throughout the world.

I wish to take the great opportunity of my presence here today at the United Nations to inform the Assembly about a dispute between Chile and Bolivia. In 1879, as the result of an unjust war — an unjust invasion — masterminded by Chilean oligarchical interests, with the participation of transnational corporations with an eye on Bolivia's natural resources, we lost our corridor to the Pacific Ocean.

Bolivia was founded in 1825 and lost access to the sea in 1879. In the early 1900s, a treaty was signed that has not been complied with. It is for that reason that I have come here to take advantage of the theme of our debate, the peaceful settlement of disputes, to say that major disputes among States have been resolved and injustices rectified through the resolve and goodwill of the relevant authorities.

Chile cannot disregard Bolivia's rights or the pronouncements of an entire continent, much less prolong indefinitely our forcibly imposed landlocked status. An unjust, imposed and non-implemented treaty cannot be allowed to continue to harm a people that is only calling for justice and for an end to its country's status as a landlocked country.

The intangibility of treaties means that they are not dogma. Treaties, like all other creations of human beings, can be changed. I say that because when we state that Chile must return our sea corridor, we are asked, what treaty? I therefore wish to take this opportunity to speak of a treaty signed in 1903 between the United States and Panama on the Panama Canal.

In 1903, a treaty on the Panama Canal was signed under which the United States was authorized to build the Panama Canal and received sovereignty, in perpetuity, over the territories on both sides of the Canal and the area of the Canal. In other words, according to the Treaty of 1903, that country would be the owner for all eternity of the Panama Canal. However, a renegotiated treaty was signed in 1977 that gradually transferred sovereignty over the Canal zone from the United States to Panama, and in 1999 Panama recovered control and administration of the Canal through the Panama Canal Authority.

How did the United States return the Panama Canal to Panama when, through the first treaty, it had to be the owner of the Canal in perpetuity? And how is it possible for Chile not to return Bolivia's sea corridor?

I wish also to take this opportunity to say that today, in this millennium, is a time of integration and of focus on the protection of humankind, not a time of domestic or external colonialism. That is why I wish to reaffirm once again that the Malvinas are for Argentina and the sea is for Bolivia. These demands, conflicts and disputes have to be resolved peacefully, and Bolivia is a peace-loving country, in keeping with the State's new political Constitution.

Bolivia appeals once again to the Government of Chile, here before the Assembly, to resolve definitively the issue of our landlocked status through peaceful settlement mechanisms. We call on the international community to support us in that endeavour, so that this conflict, which does great harm to the integration of the American continent, may finally come to an end.

Among the Bolivian people, among children and grandparents alike, there is a strong sense of the need to recover our sea corridor. Bolivia was born with a sea, and it is not possible that oligarchies and transnational companies, in order to plunder our natural resources, can be allowed also to wrest from us our territory. We need the support of all those at the helm of the United Nations to put an end to a historical injustice on the part of international Powers.

Yesterday I listened to the various statements on issues related to democracy, human rights and peace, and I feel that the statements we make here as Presidents show that we agree in theory. All of us here are great defenders of human rights who want peace and defend democracy. But we are divided. The United Nations is not united, and that makes a great difference. I listened very carefully to the statement made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon telling us that we have to change the world. We very much agree that we have to change the world. But how can we change the world if we do not change the United Nations? How can the United Nations be responsible for interventionism on many continents?

I have listened to two or three addresses by several countries, and I was very pleased. There seems to be a rebellion on the part of States against powers, authority and capitalism. I am very pleased, because when I came here for the first time in 2006, only the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Countries of Our America, with great ideological, political and programmatic clarity, stated that everything was for the people. I know some countries on other continents — very timid and fearful countries — feel that today are losing their fear of the Powers. I would like to say to them, to their representatives and to their Presidents that we should not be afraid. We should not be afraid of empires or capitalism. Capitalism and imperialism are not the solution to life or to humanity.

We are living in times of the crisis of capitalism, of a crisis in food. I remember when I was still a trade union leader, we conducted campaigns to have the external debt of underdeveloped countries — at that time, they were called underdeveloped countries, instead of developing countries — cancelled. Now I realize that our debt as poor countries can be paid, but the debts of capitalism are impossible to pay. That is what the world we are living in today shows.

We speak here of democracy. We have to defend democracy and, in order to do that, we have to intervene in some countries. But if we really wanted to be democratic, we would respect all of the resolutions of the United Nations. Just to cite an example, does the Government of the United States of America respect United Nations resolutions on the economic embargo against Cuba? It has never respected them. That is due to pride on the part of the rulers, not of the American people. The rulers are never going to respect those resolutions, but they speak of democracy and of defending democracy.

In that connection, I must express our full backing for the Cuban people. Their commander, former President Fidel Castro, the most caring person in the world that I have ever known — and I admire that revolutionary people — is, despite the embargo, engaged in continuous battle at the side of his people. It is not possible that in the twenty-first century an economic embargo continues against the Cuban people, a genocidal embargo that has failed and which violates the rights of an entire people. The embargo has been condemned by almost all of humankind and the international community, including the allies of the United States of America, for its extraterritorial character and its imposition in violation of humanitarian and international law. Bolivia also denounces the unjust inclusion of Cuba on the list unilaterally assembled by the United States in its report entitled "State Sponsors of Terrorism", the purpose of which is to justify the embargo and continue imposing new sanctions on the regime and the people of Cuba. What authority does the Government of the United States have to include a country in the list of terrorist countries? Do not all the peoples of the world realize that the number one terrorist country practicing State terrorism is the Government of the United States? There have been so many interventions, so many dead and wounded, so much killing — under the pretext of defending democracy.

Moments ago, a fellow president spoke about an intervention in Libya to restore democracy, which is a lie. They intervened in Libya not for its people but to recover oil for the Powers. We have to be sincere and straightforward with humankind, but where there are presidents who stay in power without practicing democracy but are in favour of capitalism and imperialism, there is no intervention because they are allies of the United States Government; they are allies of the empire; they are allies of capitalism. Where there are natural resources, like oil, in the hands of the people, they have to intervene under any pretext — terrorism, dictatorship or drug trafficking — all of it to recover or to plunder the natural resources.

Furthermore, I would also like to launch an appeal for the immediate release of five Cuban anti-terrorist political prisoners in the United States. Their release would show a political will to defend human rights. The President of the United States could release them; the power to do so is in his hands. I hope that justice

will be done to our five Cuban brothers, who have been imprisoned unjustly.

In truth, I do not understand it when the presidents who speak in defence of human rights are never the ones who respect human, either within or outside their own countries. I do not understand how one can speak of peace while there are economic inequalities in the world. While there is an economic policy that concentrates capital in the hands of a few and which impoverishes many, there will never be justice, there will never be peace or respect for human rights. Indeed, the economic models that concentrate capital in a few hands provoke injustice and create uprisings.

I feel that now is the best time — I am referring to various meetings at the United Nations — to gain better understanding of the situation of all the peoples of the world. We had requested the revision of some important international treaties concerning a very important product for the indigenous peoples of the Andean region, the coca leaf. Although the coca leaf has medicinal and ritual properties, it has been penalized under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Therefore, Bolivia, which wishes to remain faithful to its commitment to fight drug trafficking, has requested adherence to the Single Convention with a reservation that preserves the right to use coca leaf for cultural purposes, especially medicinal purposes, within our territory.

In some states of the United States, it is legal to sell cocaine, but the United States does not allow us to consume coca leaf — which is not cocaine. I welcome the support for the proposal on the part of many countries of the continent and the world — non-aligned countries — recognizing, after thousands of years, the consumption of coca leaf as legal. I respectfully request that the Assembly, acting on behalf of the United Nations, correct a historical prejudicial act.

Unfortunately, since there is an illegal market for coca leaf, that is, a market for cocaine or drugs, a portion of the harvest is diverted to the illegal market — but we are fighting that. We in Bolivia say that there will be no free cultivation of coca, but there cannot be zero coca leaf.

I commend the United Nations for issuing a report a few weeks ago affirming that, for the first time, Bolivia had reduced the cultivation of coca by more than 12 per cent. That is a Government achievement without any dead or wounded; previously, that kind of reduction resulted in many dead and wounded. Now, while maintaining respect for human rights and appealing to the conscience of my coca-producing brothers and sisters, we have had a net reduction.

Coca cultivation has increased in some countries, which are subsequently decertified by the United States of America. But the United States has also decertified a country like Bolivia, even though it has reduced the cultivation of coca by 12 per cent. Do we then have to plant more coca for the Government of the United States to certify us? One cannot understand it. Of course, since we are an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist people and Government, we have been decertified. That decertification is a political statement; it does not take into account the efforts made by the Bolivian people through its Government.

We are not interested in whether we are certified or not. That is the least of it. What we are interested in is the United Nations data. Honestly, the United Nations works in a transparent manner to recognize the work that our Government has done to reduce coca cultivation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Bolivia was previously a little-known country that had been abandoned, living on foreign aid. We welcomed foreign aid. I would just like to present what we have achieved since we took charge in Bolivia, in the context of the MDGs.

Bolivia was supposed to reduce extreme poverty to 24.1 per cent by 2015. I would like to report that, by 2011, we had reduced extreme poverty to 20 per cent. We have a plan. By the time Bolivia celebrates its bicentennial, we will have eradicated extreme poverty. The numbers from international organizations confirm that, last year, 10 per cent of the population went from extreme poverty to the middle class. That is 1 million Bolivians.

The second figure to note is that, according to the MDG targets, 78.5 per cent of the population should have access to safe drinking water by 2015. I would like to say that, as a result of our programme, this year we reached 78.5 per cent of the country, especially the indigenous rural communities. We have a programme called "My Water" to promote greater investments in water. What I did personally was to bring together all of the projects on safe drinking water or water for irrigation from every municipality in the country. For the second year in a row, we have invested $300,000

per municipality, and that has been rather helpful, in addition to other programmes by the Ministry of the Environment and Water, in particular in cities and in rural areas. Those programmes for drinking water mean that we have achieved our goal in 2012, not in 2015. Hopefully, by 2015 we will have achieved 90 or 100 per cent drinking water coverage. That is our programme.

Another of the Goals pertains to coverage in terms of hospital births. The MDG target for 2015 is 70 per cent. I am here to report that by 2009 we had achieved 70 per cent coverage, not to mention other programmes such as the one that provides subsidies for pregnant women and children under the age of two. We are making good progress, although with slow steps.

Why has there been such rapid change? Social programmes and structural changes have allowed us to change Bolivia. One example is telecommunications. Bolivia has 339 municipalities. In 2006, telephone coverage or mobile phone coverage in rural areas existed in only 90 municipalities. The day after tomorrow, I am going to inaugurate mobile communication in the last municipality, the furthest from the cities, in the Bolivian Amazon. Now my brothers and sisters living in rural areas have telephones or mobile phones in all 339 municipalities. Entel, our telephone service, had been privatized. We took it back, nationalized it, and began to invest in it in order to provide better service.

We have made progress for the following reason. As President, I received a mandate from the Bolivian people to recover or nationalize our natural resources. The biggest company in Bolivia is Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB). For 20 years, neoliberal Governments worked to privatize our natural resources. They sold our natural resources, especially oil, to transnational corporations. Bolivia received only 18 per cent of all the profits, while 82 per cent went to transnational corporations. In addition, what did the contracts signed by neoliberal Governments say? Who was the owner? The oil transnational corporations acquired the right of ownership at the mouth of the well. The Governments would tell us that the oil and gas continued to be ours as long as it was under the ground. But once it came to the mouth of the well, it belonged to the transnational corporations. We fought, we mobilized, we raised awareness among the Bolivian people as to the importance of retaking or nationalizing that natural resource. On 1 May 2006, we nationalized that industry without any misgivings.

That act changed the national economy. In 2006, our international reserves stood at $1.7 billion. Our international reserves now stand at more than $13 billion. In 2005, YPFB had $300 million in revenue. This year, it has $3.5 billion. In 2005, total public investments amounted to $600 million. Out of that $600 million, 70 per cent came from aid and loans and only 30 per cent came from the national treasury. This year State investments will amount to approximately $6 billion, with an additional $6 billion in private investments. How did that change come about in such a short period of time?

Of course, Bolivia is a small country. But we have managed to change our national economy. That is why I say to countries whose natural resources, including oil and gas, are still in private hands that my recommendation is for them to nationalize and recover their natural resources. Natural resources cannot belong to transnational corporations; they belong to the peoples of the world, under State administration.

I would also like to say that there have been social changes. Through a constituent assembly, we have guaranteed basic services as a human right. Consequently, they cannot be in private hands. It is a task for the State. Water, electricity and communications — we have nationalized them and turned them into human rights. It is very important that those basic services be human rights. While we still have some problems in Bolivia with electricity, we will continue to work to ensure that that basic service is a human right as well.

I am here to share our brief experience with Governments, presidents, ambassadors and prime ministers. Where there is the will to change, there will be change. It depends to a large extent on willingness, constant efforts to educate our people and transparent work. Of course, we still have so many demands to meet — sometimes, too, exaggerated demands from a particular social sector or region — but regardless of our interests or claims, our homeland and humankind as a whole come first.

Dealing as we are with the problems we have in Bolivia and the world with climate issues, I would like to take this opportunity to convey an invitation to an international meeting on 21 December to greet a new era, an invitation to the celebration of the end of the cycle of non-time and the beginning of a new cycle of equilibrium and harmony for Mother Earth. It would

take too long here to go into the knowledge of our indigenous brothers in Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia and Ecuador, but basically we are issuing this invitation to a virtual — and actual — debate on the following topics.

First, the global crisis of sapitalism; second, the crisis of civilization — world Government, capitalism, socialism, community and the culture of life; third, the crisis of climate — human beings' relationship to nature; fourth, the energy of community and change; fifth, awareness of Mother Earth; sixth, recovering ancestral practices and customs and the natural cosmic calendar; seventh, living the right way as a solution to the global crisis — because once again we affirm that we cannot live better by plundering natural resources, and that is a profound debate that we should have with the whole world; eighth, food sovereignty and security through food sovereignty; ninth, integration — through brotherhood, community, economy, complementarity, the right to communication, and community learning for life; the new human being with an integrated identity; complementarity; self-knowledge, awakening and, of course, health, which is so important.

I would like to say that according to the Mayan calendar, 21 December marks the end of the non-time and the beginning of time. It is the end of the *macha* — the darkness — and the beginning of the *pacha* — communitarianism; it is the end of selfishness and the beginning of brotherhood; it is the end of individualism and the beginning of collectivism. As scientists know very well, 21 December this year marks the end of the era of anthropocentrism and the beginning of biocentrism. It is the end of hatred and the beginning of love, the end of lies and the beginning of truth, the end of sadness and the beginning of joy, it is the end of division and the beginning of unity. This is a theme to be developed, and that is why we invite all those here, those who are betting on humankind, to share their experiences for the good of humankind.

As always, I would like to thank the President for these debates at the United Nations. We are always thinking about new generations and about the good of humankind, although sometimes sectoral interests intrude — but as representatives who come here from time to time, we have an obligation to think about how to shoulder our responsibilities, and that means, as someone said just now, bringing an end to the powers that be. This is not a time when we can continue to praise those powers; we are living in a time when peoples must be freed and where we must constantly seek economic and social equality for all human beings, a time to bring dignity to every citizen.

I would like to commend those statements that questioned interventionism, m litary bases and troops. There will be social peace only when we change such political and economic policies and put an end to military bases and interventionism. My respect goes to those who resist military intervention by the Powers, which is not a solution. That is something we have learned, and that is why we hope that these debates will serve to help us think about life and humanity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Evo Morales Ayma, Constitutional President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia.

Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Njie-Saidy (Gambia): I have the singular honour of reading the statement of His Excellency Mr. Al Hadji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, the President of the Republic of the Gambia, who would have loved to be here today but was unable to so, owing to unavoidable circumstances. However, he sends his best wishes to all present. I will now read his statement.

> "First and foremost, I thank Allah, the Almighty, for making another annual gathering of world leaders possible. I would first like to

congratulate the President on his election and wish him success in his tenure as he manages the affairs of the Assembly. Let me also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless leadership and sterling contribution to the creation of a better world for all.

"Our world unquestionably continues to be plagued by numerous challenges that can be solved only through our collective response. Multilateral diplomacy and institutions surely offer the best hope yet for tackling our development conundrums, protracted conflicts and man-made and natural disasters.

"Peace and security will always remain a cornerstone of the Organization and for that reason my delegation is concerned with the matter and welcomes the President's choice of the theme 'Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means'.

"As we speak, many conflicts are raging around the world in ways that challenge the credibility and clout of the Organization. The paralysis displayed by our common security mechanisms, for example, is astounding. Geopolitical interests have trampled the goodwill and humanitarian concerns that should compel us all to address those raging infernos — be they in the Middle East, Asia, Africa or elsewhere. Our collective security will continue to be undermined by geopolitical considerations, unless and until we find the courage to reform the Security Council. Ongoing conflicts, for example in Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Syria, are all recent cases in point. The Security Council should not be the stumbling block in the way of the settlement of disputes by peaceful or other means. Rather, it should be a more helpful institution.

"My delegation is fully aware of the need for the peaceful settlement of some of the conflicts in Africa, but we are equally aware of the need for robust action in dealing with the spoilers and merchants of death and misery in the continent. The Economic Community of West African States is working to find solutions to all those conflicts but needs, of course, the support of the international community.

"We see the role of the Security Council as a partner and enabler of decisive action, but time is running out. The elements of doom have been emboldened by our inaction. The United Nations and the United Nations Office for West Africa must work decisively to address the conflicts in Mali and Guinea-Bissau without delay. The engagement of the African Union (AU) will undoubtedly be crucial. Terrorists, drug dealers and organized criminal networks should be stopped in their tracks at all costs before it is too late.

"The relevance of the Organization has at times been questioned, but one element that remains unchallenged is its character as the best forum for confronting global challenges. As we convene to discuss the issues of climate change, economic crises, financial turmoil, food insecurity, conflicts, fighting disease and poverty, or the special interests of Africa, the convening power of the United Nations confers a legitimacy that is indeed unparalleled elsewhere.

"As developing countries, we therefore believe in the work that this Organization of ours does, and it is for that reason that we will support the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to revitalize it — as the voice for the voiceless.

"We also use this forum to call on the international financial institutions to open up and embrace overdue reforms. They should be transparent and inclusive and raise the profile of their smallest members, such as low-income countries or least developed countries (LDCs). We call on them to embrace the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs.

"The Istanbul Programme of Action must not become a string of broken promises, unfulfilled commitments and weak resource mobilization, as happened with its predecessors. As LDCs we are ready to hold ourselves accountable for the implementation of the commitments we made in Istanbul. We are equally ready to meet the targets set out in the Programme. It is therefore our collective hope, expectation and belief that our partners and the rest of the international community will also fulfil their commitments and uphold their part of the bargain. Let us work together to bring about the graduation of half of the LDCs by 2020, in line with the target we set ourselves. It is achievable if we all forge the appropriate global partnerships for resource mobilization.

"The scorecard on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shows that, while some achievements have been made with regard to some of the Goals, a great deal still remains to be achieved. My country has achieved some of the key elements of the MDGs and is on track to meet all of them. In view of the fact that 2015 is just around the corner, we need to do more to mobilize the remaining resources required to further improve the critical links needed for success on the achievement of the MDGs.

"Critical to the achievement of the MDGs will be the scaling up of resources by enhancing the global partnerships that we have forged for the Goals. We must mobilize the modest resources that are needed so that 2015 will not be another unfulfilled milestone.

"The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) has defined the mechanisms through which sustainable development goals should be negotiated and agreed upon. It is our hope that the consultations on the post-Rio mechanisms will be inclusive, transparent and representative. Beyond managing the depleting resources of the Earth, we must all push for ambitious and realistic goals and targets on sustainable food, water and energy. We must also take into account the special situations of LDCs and other vulnerable groups of countries.

"My delegation is of the strong belief that, in the euphoria for sustainable development goals, the drive towards the achievement of the MDGs must not be compromised in any way. We must hold ourselves accountable for meeting the Goals by 2015, and not try to shift the goalposts when the deadline is close at hand. We must also lay a solid groundwork for the post-2015 development agenda.

"For developing countries to continue to benefit from the appreciable growth they are experiencing and in order not to compromise their capacities to provide education, health care and other social services to their peoples, debt cancellation or forgiveness is still a key element. Debt servicing still poses a major threat to our ability to attain sustainable growth. It is our belief that our partners and the Bretton Woods institutions should consider the further extension of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

"As we strive in the Sahel to deal with drought and the crop failure of the past year, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his laudable efforts, as we heard today, through his initiative for the Sahel and for his plans to assist the region, including Mali. We thank him for that initiative, which we look forward to seeing realized. We also thank all our development partners for the support they have rendered, both to my Government and to the Sahel. We are grateful for their solidarity and humanitarian support. In view of the perennial nature of food insecurity in our region, it is my humble and considered view that the international community needs to do more to render greater support to the agricultural sector of our economies.

"The role of the small-scale farmer needs to be boosted, and we must, through global partnerships, fast-track the numerous agricultural initiatives that have been announced to support African agriculture. Agricultural systems across Africa need to be made more resilient in terms of inputs, technological know-how, scientific research and the setting up of related training institutions. The African farmer needs to benefit from modern farming techniques and technology. In that context, I would like to thank the Government and people of Australia for their outstanding generosity towards boosting agriculture and food security in Africa.

"With the establishment of UN-Women, the United Nations took a great step forward in mainstreaming the gender dimension into its work. As an ardent supporter of women's rights and participation in all sectors of society, I must commend UN-Women for the way it has been evolving. We look forward to the establishment of its regional offices. We will work with all concerned to advance the promotion of the rights of women and girls, once we assume our position as a member of the Executive Board. Advancing the welfare of women, which starts with girls as future women, will always be a priority for my Government.

"Africa is indeed witnessing a revolution in information and communications technology, which is a critical sector for us. Our considered view is that, with the completion of the Africa Coast to Europe submarine cable network, there will be an even greater transformation in that very important sector. It should further help to increase

the transfer of critical technology for the economic advancement of our peoples.

"In that project we see a great opportunity for South-South and North-South cooperation in ways that will revolutionize education, agriculture and the provision of health care, among other areas. We therefore call on our partners to support the growth of the information and communications technology sector with a view to enhancing our productive capacity, while also generating youth employment, since youth unemployment is one of the greatest threats to humankind and to our social and economic advancement. We must therefore form partnerships across the globe to address that dangerous phenomenon, which is a disaster waiting to happen.

"Allow me to address some recent conflicts that threaten the peace and stability of Africa and the world at large. Our youth, for example, are being sucked into conflicts and a life of crime, with their productive talents being wasted. Our modest gains are being wiped out through instability, and even our societal cohesion is seriously threatened. If we do not act fast now, we risk creating more upheavals, which will overwhelm our capacity to contain them. The international community will therefore pay a very high price if it does not wake up from its slumber and solve the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau that I highlighted earlier.

"In West Africa, our ongoing security challenges are being compounded by such situations. ECOWAS should not be left alone to shoulder the burden of those conflicts. I am elated by the fact that, this morning, the issues of Mali, the entire Sahel and the Maghreb were discussed. The AU and ECOWAS are ready, and I hope that the international community, particularly the Security Council, is also ready. The AU is ready to act to salvage the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. The Security Council must, as I have said, act with a sense of greater urgency. We cannot let terrorists, drug dealers and organized criminal gangs establish a sanctuary in our backyard.

"In line with our foreign policy, the Gambia stands ready, as always, to contribute meaningfully to the settlement of such conflicts. The level of steadfastness shown in solving the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone some years ago must now, we hope, equally be shown in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

"The situation in Darfur continues to occupy the attention of my delegation, as well. We call for more dialogue in finding a lasting solution to that major conflict. We are equally concerned about the lingering conflict between the Sudan and South Sudan. Dialogue is essential, and is the only way forward to solve that conflict. The parties must implement the recommendations of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and those of the road map.

"As they embark on settling the outstanding issues, we urge our brothers and sisters to demonstrate the same magnanimity and extraordinary statesmanship that characterized the establishment of the independence of South Sudan. They should remember that they will be neighbours forever and, as such, are mutually dependent upon each other for their national security.

"Let me commend the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia, the United Nations and the African Union for the progress that they are making in Somalia. The pressure must be sustained until all of Somalia is liberated and is placed under the sole authority of the Somali Government. Insecurity and piracy must be stamped out. The spoilers must be denied sanctuary, lest they continue destabilizing the whole of the Horn of Africa.

"As we dwell on such situations, we are equally concerned about the conflicts ravaging the Middle East. Afghanistan, for example, has been in a state of unrest for too long. It is time that Afghans be given enough space and capacity to solve their problems. Home-grown and inclusive dialogue and national reconciliation are the best way forward to lasting peace and stability in that country.

"We all witnessed the dramatic and historic events that have recently transformed parts of the Middle East and Africa. It is therefore our hope that those transformations will endure and will nurture the ideals of peace, security, development and democracy. We must not lose sight of some of the negative concomitant effects of those upheavals, as is currently evident in Syria.

"My delegation believes that the Annan plan could have brought about stability and could have

provided the space for dialogue among the parties, if it had been given a chance. It seems that there is lack of goodwill and trust among the parties, as well as the invisible hand of external elements determined to achieve a particular outcome. Syria is now a deeply divided society. The international community is partly to blame on account of its inaction.

"The Palestinian situation is indeed deplorable. It has deteriorated to the point that a one-State solution may be inevitable. In defiance of international law, human decency and restraint, Israel, the occupying Power, is imposing a de facto situation on Palestinians through its despicable settlement activity and land seizures. The sad reality is that it is the mechanisms of the Security Council, which are constantly invoked, that further delay or stifle the action necessary to bring about lasting peace in Palestine. Israel's excesses, namely, the land seizures, settlement activity, mass imprisonment of Palestinians, denial of revenue, maiming and murder of Palestinians by the State apparatus and many others, must be halted. The truth is bitter when told, but it will set us all free.

"Let me also address some burning political issues of our time. The embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States 50 years ago is still in place for no justifiable reason. Even if perhaps it made sense at the time, keeping it in place today does not make any sense at all. It is shameful that, in the twenty-first century, a Cold War relic remains the main stumbling block between the establishment of good-neighbourly relations and the rejection of empty political cacophony in some quarters. We therefore call upon the United States to lift the embargo and throw it into the dustbin of history, where it rightfully belongs.

"My delegation would also like to use this rostrum to appeal to the collective membership of the United Nations, including China, to contribute to opening the avenues for Taiwan's membership in the various funds, agencies, treaty bodies and programmes. That would only enhance the effectiveness of those bodies for our mutual benefit. The world, not only Taiwan, stands to benefit. We all agree that Taiwan is a key player in technology, international trade, politics and many other areas. It has enduring ties with China. We therefore appeal for the practical extension of the rapport that Taiwan has with China to the international stage. China conducts trade, business and tourism with Taiwan. As I speak, both are engaging in discussing a range of bilateral issues. The rest of the international community, including the States Members of the United Nations, should follow suit. Avenues for dialogue must be opened.

"The stalled reform of the Security Council is disheartening and even dangerous. Year in and year out, we come to the General Assembly. We meet in various forums to discuss the issues. We hold dialogues and exchanges and come up with proposals. Then we get nowhere. I will mention what Kofi Annan said at the time of launching his well-known report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), namely, that no reform of the United Nations is complete without the reform of the Security Council. I think that is critical. It is as valid now as it was when it was said seven years ago. The resistance to change should come to an end. The paralysis of the reform agenda must come to an end. We cannot afford as a group to be in a state of coma when larger regional interests, especially those of Africa, are at stake and get shunted around or jettisoned. Africa needs to be at the table and we will not budge on that demand, as previous speakers have said and as our heads of State have reiterated here. We must reform or risk delegitimizing the actions taken, and the decisions made, in the name of our collective security.

Ms. Flores (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

"Allow me, at this point, to recognize the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, the new Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. We have confidence in his abilities and experience as an astute statesman. We are also aware of his keen interest in Africa and his engagement with our continent at various periods in his diplomatic life. We therefore look forward to jointly advancing the special needs of Africa with him under the guidance of the Secretary-General.

"On a final note, it is my hope that the next Presidents of the General Assembly will consider other themes beyond that of peace and security, although there can be no doubt that peace and

security are critical. Where possible an intermarriage of themes might also be considered."

I wish all members a successful General Assembly session.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister for Women's Affairs of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Mr. Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Di Rupo (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of my country, I would like to welcome the broad vision and the pertinence of the ideas put forward by the Secretary-General.

I come from Belgium, one of the six founding countries of the European Union (EU), a multicultural union of 500 million people who, as President Obama has reminded us, live in peace — something that I wish for the entire world — after experiencing horrifying wars.

Belgium provides a unique setting for political decisions and international meetings. Brussels is the capital of Europe and also the seat of NATO headquarters. We are naturally open to the world. I myself come from the city of Mons, which will be the European cultural capital in 2015. In 2014, Belgium will solemnly commemorate the centennial of the start of the sad and painful First World War. We will do so in memory of the young people from more than 50 countries who, on our territory, defended the ideals of peace and freedom. In 2013, Antwerp will host the World Outgames, a gathering of tolerance and diversity, while the city of Liège is a candidate to host the World's Fair in 2017. All those international events have a single goal: to bring us closer together and to mobilize around universal values.

For my country, respect for life and human rights is fundamental. Whether we speak of the rights of the child, of women or of refugees, or of the struggle against all forms of discrimination, a single principle guides my country: the effective equality of all human beings, regardless of status or beliefs. In that light, Belgium will join Slovenia in sponsoring a draft resolution against racial discrimination. I hope members will support it.

All heads of State and ministers share an immense collective responsibility to ensure that women become equal to men worldwide at the political, social and economic levels; to ensure that little girls are no longer subjected to circumcision; and that acts of violence against women are systematically fought and eliminated.

In my country, women head three ministries: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Police. Significant efforts have also been made to more effectively combat domestic violence. Our national laws prohibit and punish all forms of discrimination, whether on the basis of gender or that of claimed race, disability or sexual orientation. In my country, both marriage and adoption are open to same-sex couples. Those are grounds for pride in Belgium.

With the support of several countries of the European Union, Belgium invites members to take vigorous, concerted action in various realms of social life. I am thinking first and foremost of the decriminalization of sexual orientation and the promotion of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. In that regard, I welcome the initiative of UNESCO to counter homophobia in schools.

For my country, freedom of religion, which is to say the freedom to practise or not practise a religion, is fundamental. Belgium unequivocally condemns Islamophobia. We just as firmly condemn violence, which is unacceptable in all cases. We believe that human beings should be free to think what they wish and be able to express their indignation without ever resorting to violence. Diplomatic missions should be inviolable throughout the world. It is not by oppressing human beings or promoting violence that the

fundamental challenges of prosperity, the well-being of citizens and peace will be resolved.

Belgium attaches particular importance to strengthening the rule of law throughout the world. The reason for that is simple: in my country we are convinced that the rule of law is necessary for development and prosperity. It contributes to a better world, because the purpose of the rule of law is to enable every human being to live, flourish and love in complete freedom. For that reason, and in the spirit of mutual human respect, we support the principle of the responsibility to protect victims of violence wherever they are. In the same spirit, Belgium responded to the Secretary-General's call by instituting 17 specific projects.

The rule of law and the enforcement of respect for human rights require us to step up the fight against impunity. Belgium will continue its policy of active cooperation with international criminal tribunals. The action of the International Criminal Court will help to usher in an era of responsibility. It is incumbent upon all States to cooperate with the Court. Belgium, together with Slovenia and the Netherlands, calls on all States represented here to improve international cooperation in mutual legal assistance and extradition.

As the President of Brazil pointed out (see A/67/PV.6), the effects of the economic crisis and financial speculation are felt by every household. When the balance sheets of banks represent 300 per cent, 400 per cent or 600 per cent of gross domestic product — indeed, even more in some countries — we should not be surprised that there is a direct link between bank management and the economic and budgetary health of sovereign States. In many countries in-depth studies have been carried out and decisions taken, but clearly that is not enough. That is because the financial world operates in line with the rhythm of its own peculiar logic. Here at the United States the phenomenon is better understood than elsewhere. Programme trading dominates financial exchanges. The software reacts a million times faster than human traders, buying and selling thousands of shares every millionth of a second. We must work together here at the international level to establish oversight mechanisms for the financial world, with a view to ensuring that it again assists more in job creation and that it steers clear of risky management practices that compromise the economic and budgetary health of nations.

In Belgium we are working on the issue nationally and within the eurozone. But an agreed international approach is becoming indispensable. Beyond such in-depth reforms in the banking and financial sectors, let us also dare to tax financial transactions. It is high time that income derived from that source be used to promote prosperity for our people.

The Assembly is committed to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. We can never underline enough that we must break with an economic development model that devours natural resources and energy. Belgium supports the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative. It also stresses the importance of merging within one process the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable development goals.

I would like to turn to some regional issues that my country finds especially disturbing and tragic. In the Great Lakes region, the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the resurgent violence and the Mouvement du 23 Mars rebellion greatly concern the Belgian Government, especially because of their serious impact on local populations. We see images of massacres, rape, forced recruitment, including of children, pillaging, 400,000 internally displaced persons — all of it completely unacceptable. Belgium calls upon the countries of the region to redouble their efforts to put an end to the current rebellion. We also call for a response to the root causes of instability in the Great Lakes region. We commend the Secretary-General's attention to the region and his initiative in calling a high-level meeting tomorrow on the crisis. Our Foreign Minister will attend, and Belgium stands ready to do what it can to help.

The territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must categorically be respected. All external support for the rebels must stop. Let us not delude ourselves. Denying the facts does not make them disappear. The facts on the ground give the lie to all denials. Belgium calls on all countries in the Great Lakes region to pledge to respect the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Belgium also urges the Congolese authorities to institute the necessary reforms in the army and the police to re-establish the rule of law in the whole of its territory, including, obviously, the eastern part.

I dearly hope that reason will prevail. Belgium is ready to work to help restore trust among the countries of the region. We furthermore hope that direct relations between the President of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and the President of Rwanda can be established and that it will speed progress towards a solution.

As to Syria, we are all deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation of an impasse on the ground, and a political impasse as well. We are appalled by the posture of a regime that kills its own citizens. Beyond the 30,000 dead there are at least 250,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, and even more internally displaced. How is it that the collective human conscience is not in agreement to stop the massacre? I say respectfully to the members of the Security Council that we cannot knowingly allow such human suffering to go on. Unless we take action we are complicit in crimes against humanity.

Belgium has faith in and supports Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi. Belgium also supports the efforts by Arab countries and hopes that they will be successful. We must all hope for a political solution. One thing is certain. Bashar Al-Assad must leave. The regime has lost all legitimacy. Given the urgency of the situation and the approaching winter, Belgium urges the international community to take concrete steps on the humanitarian front and to come to the aid of the millions of people affected. Humanitarian concerns are our highest priority. The Belgian Government provides financial support for humanitarian aid to the refugees.

In that connection, I will allow myself to insist that my country demands earnestly that a solution be found to enable humanitarian organizations to carry out their work, particularly in hospitals, in line with international humanitarian law. I believe that both the Chinese and Russian authorities will be able to join us in those objectives.

I have another comment concerning the region; I wish to mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Belgium favours the rapid resumption of negotiations aimed at finding a solution based on the coexistence of two States — the State of Israel and a State of Palestine that is independent, democratic, united and viable — living together in peace, security and prosperity. We also wish to state very clearly our opposition to the continuation of colonization.

My country believes that multilateralism is the only way to improve conditions of our planet. Belgium is the fifteenth largest contributor to the United Nations.

Let us have the courage and strength to agree to free humankind from wars and social injustices, and support its development. I invite all of us to spur our awareness. Let us demonstrate together our capacity to act.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Elio di Rupo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali.

The Honourable Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to pay well-deserved tribute to Chris Stevens and his colleagues, who died in Benghazi for the same ideals as those of our common Organization, the United Nations.

Next, I wish to convey the warm congratulations of the Malian delegation on the outstanding election of the new President of the General Assembly. That choice confirms the recognition, were such needed, of his qualities as a skilled diplomat. It is also a tribute to his country, Serbia, which maintains friendly and cooperative relations with my country. The President of the General Assembly can be assured of the Malian delegation's complete readiness to work with him for the full success of his mandate.

In the same spirit, I express my great appreciation to his distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the excellent manner in which he led the work of the previous session. I also take this opportunity to pay warm tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his ongoing commitment to the ideals of the Organization.

The settlement of international disputes by peaceful means, which the President proposed as the central theme of the general debate, is timely, as it is a part of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, whose relevant provisions aim to limit hotbeds of tension through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional arrangements or agreements, or through other peaceful means. The subject is quite current, in the light of the many crises and conflicts that seriously threaten international peace and security.

The settlement of disputes by peaceful means is particularly important for my country, Mali, as it is a country that is firmly attached to the ideals of peace and stability. Despite that, today it is undergoing one of the most difficult periods in its history. Its northern part has been occupied by armed groups consisting of fundamentalist terrorists, drug traffickers and criminals of every other sort. The most fundamental human rights are being violated continuously by a horde of heartless and lawless vandals.

The Government of Mali has just requested the International Criminal Court to consider those odious acts, which are no more and no less than war crimes and crimes against humanity. Whipping, amputation, summary execution, rape, stoning and looting and destruction of cultural and historical monuments and sites are the daily lot of the afflicted and helpless people of northern Mali.

That sad situation led the interim President of the Republic of Mali to request, on 1 September, the Economic Community of West African States for assistance in recovering the occupied territories and fighting terrorism. Similar requests have been made to the Security Council through the Secretary-General, as well as to the French Republic, the United States of America, the African Union and the European Union.

However, I would like to firmly emphasize that a lasting solution to the situation in the Sahel requires stronger and more dynamic cooperation among the States of the Sahel-Saharan region. In that vein, the Government of Mali remains in favour of the convening of a meeting of heads of State and Government of the Sahel region, with the support of the United Nations and other partners, in order to support and strengthen capacities and the arrangement for coordinating existing regional mechanisms.

In the specific case of our common area, the neighbouring countries of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger have set up mechanisms, such as the joint operational military staff committee based in Tamanrasset, Algeria, and others involving joint patrols and the right of pursuit. But we must recognize that those mechanisms need to be fully operational. In that regard, I would like to call for the support of the international community for their effective implementation.

My delegation would like to strongly emphasize that the aggression and occupation in the northern part of Mali is a major collateral consequence of the Libyan crisis, as indicated in the report of the joint United Nations/African Union mission to assess the impact of the Libyan crisis in the Sahel region (see S/2012/42).

The Security Council considered that report in January (see S/PV.6709).

The presence today of terrorist groups of various nationalities on our soil and in the Sahel region is a situation that should mobilize the entire international community to take joint, rapid and effective action, because that threat knows no bounds. Here I should like to reiterate the determination of the Government of Mali to continue the work that it has begun jointly with other core countries in the framework of the combat against terrorism, transnational organized crime and irredentist, subversive forces in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

In parallel with that approach, I should like to reaffirm the commitment undertaken by the interim President and the Government of Mali to negotiate with our compatriots who are not terrorists. I have said it before and I will say it again from this United Nations rostrum: we in Mali are not afraid or ashamed of negotiating, but we will not negotiate with terrorists. We are not prepared to negotiate issues that call into question the integrity of our territory and the secular nature of the country.

The situation in northern Mali due to the occupation has resulted in a deterioration in humanitarian conditions, which were already precarious owing to the flow of internally displaced persons and of people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Because of the crisis, more than 350,000 people have had to flee northern Mali, including 84,000 internally displaced persons and more than 268,000 others who are refugees in neighbouring countries. The crisis has also hampered access to education for more than 560,000 school-age

children, 300,000 of whom were in school before the crisis began.

There has also been damage to educational facilities and equipment. In addition, 85 per cent of all teachers and 10,000 pupils have been displaced to the south, and 50,000 school-age children are now in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, schools have been occupied by flood-affected people in the south.

As the Assembly is aware, Mali is facing tremendous humanitarian needs in terms of housing, food, health, education and nutrition for refugees, displaced persons and wage earners. During his stay in the region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stated on 31 July 2012 that the crisis in Mali was "one of the most neglected humanitarian situations in the world". He said that from an appeal for $153 million, his Office had received only about $49 million to deal with that humanitarian crisis.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Valerie Amos noted during her visit to Mali in August that $213 million was needed to deal with the humanitarian crisis that is currently affecting my country. That shows that the humanitarian situation is continuing to deteriorate, thus increasing the cost of intervention.

Here I would like to reiterate the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to all brotherly countries and all partners of goodwill for their hospitality in hosting our compatriots and for their generous contributions. I therefore call for a greater mobilization by all of Mali's partners and friends as well as the coordination of aid for Mali nationals who are displaced or refugees.

Our Government of National Unity was established on 20 August 2012, with the fundamental mission of quickly liberating the northern regions of the country and of holding democratic, transparent, just and credible elections. With a view to recovering territorial integrity, we are calling for the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution authorizing, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, intervention by an international military force so as to help the Malian army to retake and ensure the security of our national territory.

The Government of Mali would like to see the immediate arrival of such a force to support the defence and security forces of Mali in carrying out their noble mission of recovering and maintaining our territorial integrity and of protecting persons and property. The people of Mali continue to hope that the members of the Security Council will give due consideration to that request.

I should therefore like to take this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and to the United Nations for their ongoing efforts to put a lasting end to the crisis in Mali, which also threatens the stability of the subregion and of Africa, and even beyond.

Our meetings are taking place at a time when developing countries are facing many major challenges, in particular the consequences of the economic and financial crisis, the burden of external debt and a decline in development assistance. There is therefore a need to undertake a more in-depth dialogue on new strategies aimed at mobilizing additional stable and predictable resources so as to ensure financing for development programmes and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular in the areas of health, education, food security and the environment.

Climate change is one of the major challenges facing the world. The very survival of our planet is threatened by natural disasters caused by that phenomenon, which is seriously affecting living conditions in countries of the Sahel such as mine through, inter alia, the inexorable advance of the desert; the silting of rivers, in particular the river Niger; ecosystem deterioration; floods; and problematic precipitation patterns.

I should like to highlight the need to find appropriate responses to this serious situation so as to avert tragic repercussions for sustainable development in the most vulnerable countries.

The United Nations has a pivotal role to play in the building of a new world order that is based on justice, solidarity and sustainable development. In order to tackle current and future challenges, it is important that the current mode of functioning of the United Nations be reviewed so as to take into account the new configuration of the world, which is fundamentally different from that which prevailed at the time of its founding. Such a review should, inter alia, make it possible to correct the historical imbalance that results in the continued exclusion of Africa from the limited circle of the countries that are permanent members of the Security Council.

To conclude, I hope that all present will agree with me that the situation in Mali is a manifestation of security problems in the Sahel and that it should be dealt with comprehensively through the appropriate United Nations mechanisms. It is therefore urgent to act, first of all to put an end to the suffering of the people of Mali, and secondly to prevent the development of a similar or worse situation for other peoples in the Sahel, or even the rest of the world.

It is also urgent to act because criminal and terrorist activities in northern Mali and the security risks that they pose for the entire subregion are in the long term a serious threat to the rest of the world.

Finally, it is urgent to act so as to resume cooperation with our bilateral and multilateral partners so as to consolidate a republic based on secular and democratic values.

Today my people are seriously affected. But Malians have not lost hope, because they are convinced of the support of other nations, whose leaders and respresentatives are here. Malians in both the north and the south legitimately await their active solidarity to emerge from the crisis. My people are convinced that their appeal for international solidarity will be heard and followed up with appropriate measures. Malians know that nations have the means. They look forward to decisive and diligent action. At stake is the stability and security of our subregion, of Africa and of the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Cheick Modibo Diarra, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Bazoum (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session on his election. I also wish to congratulate his country for that success, which allows him to manage the Organization during his term of office. I would also like to congratulate the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, whose term of office was a very busy one. Lastly, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the tireless work that he has undertaken through the programme he submitted for the next five years and through which he particularly focuses on sustainable development, peace, security and the participation of women and young people.

Sad reality shows us that some people, using the freedom of expression that is guaranteed in their own countries, have believed that that freedom includes the right to publish cartoons and to produce a video that insults Islam. Those acts are comparable to anti-Semitic acts or racist acts in general by those who reject any differences and insist on making that a rule of conduct. We firmly condemn those actions, which are hurtful and offensive for Muslims. But however disgraceful they may be, they cannot justify the outbreak of violence we have seen, especially those against diplomatic missions. In particular, we condemn the murderous attack against the United States diplomatic mission in Benghazi, and we repeat here the sincere condolences of the people and Government of the Niger to the American people and Government. We reassert that Islam, a religion of balance and moderation, cannot provide a basis for such hateful responses. Those who, in the name of Islam are behaving like savage hordes discredit this great rel. ion and, in doing so, are behaving exactly like those they claim to denounce.

The sad facts that I have just referred to demonstrate the wisdom of the theme the President chose to place at the centre of his mandate, that is, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international dis[illegible]s or situations by peaceful means". The peaceful settlement of disputes, we may recall, was the theme of the general debate at the sixty-sixth session. Between the two sessions, the position of my country on the issue has not changed.

At the sixty-sixth session, my country's President, Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, said from this rostrum: "We might have thought that the end of the Cold War would open the way to an age of full and lasting peace around the world" (*A/66/PV.20, p. 17*). Unfortunately, because there was no ability, or perhaps not even the will, to attack the evil at its roots, the hope for a world without conflict recedes like the horizon as one approaches it. The root of the evil is bad governance, politically and economically. The promises of liberty, equality and justice, of the rule of law and solidarity — promises that were made to people both globally and at the national level — have still not been upheld. The lack of

any regulation of the global economy, the domination of banks, unfair trade and the growth of inequalities between and within nations are factors of disorder, crises and conflicts that disrupt world peace. The rise of terrorism and the increasingly strong probability of criminal forces controlling great areas will worsen tensions throughout the world.

Anticipating international conflicts and disputes is the best way to prevent them. As international economic competition can lead to war, the anticipation of crises should create specific conditions for global economic growth that benefits all. To do that, there should be mechanisms to regulate the global economy with the goal, among others, of ending the hegemony of financial capital and unfair trade. The end of the hegemony of financial capital should allow us to direct available financial resources towards investments in the real economy rather than towards speculation.

The end of unfair trade will allow countries that produce raw materials, such as the Niger, to draw greater benefit from them, particularly through the change that generates added value. If a country such as mine were able to get a fair price for its raw materials and to establish real control over their exploitation, then the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved by 2015. That is one of the ambitions of the programme for the renaissance of the Niger that President Issoufou presented.

On the basis of that programme, the Government has just drawn up an economic and social development plan for 2012 to 2015. For financing the programme, the Niger is organizing a donors' meeting to be held in Paris on 13 and 14 November. The 3N initiative — Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens — is an integral and important part of the plan. I take the opportunity here to invite all partners of the Niger, both bilateral and multilateral, both public and private, to take an active part.

Allow me also to take the opportunity to thank all those who have responded positively to the appeal that our President launched here on 23 September 2011 during his address to the Asembly at its sixty-sixth session, calling for assistance to the people of the Niger following that year's mediocre harvest. The mobilization of the people and the Government, as well as all our partners, enabled us to prevent the drought from leading to famine, while creating the conditions to prepare for the 2012-2013 harvest. The results are very promising despite the recent flooding in the country.

It is said that history has more imagination than do men, because events often escape the control of those who cause them. It is my hope that this saying will not apply to the Arab Spring, which has created turmoil from which we hope good will come. Allow me to recall the fact that at the Group of Eight Summit in Deauville on 26 May 2011, President Issoufou drew the attention of the Heads of State and Government present on the need for them not to lose sight of the foreseeable consequences of a Libyan conflict in the Sahel-Saharan region.

His fears were unfortunately confirmed with the outbreak of the rebellion in Mali on 17 January, triggered by elements from Libya and followed by the coup d'état of 22 March, which dealt democracy a severe blow while enabling the occupation of two thirds of Malian territory, not just by external forces, some of them from Libya, but also by terrorists and criminal organizations specializing in various types of trafficking, particularly drugs. In our view, the current situation in Mali constitutes a serious threat to the security and stability of the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as the countries in the thick of things.

The ambition of the jihadists who have subjugated northern Mali, destroying the patrimonial historic sites of Timbuktu, cutting off hands and forcing women to wear the burka, is to conquer the whole of West Africa and the Maghreb. Once they have achieved that goal, will they stop there? Of course not. They will immediately go on to attack Europe and the whole of the rest of the world. This is therefore a global threat, and the response should be global, too.

It must be immediate and unhesitating, because we know well that postponing a fight always puts one at a disadvantage. Therefore the international community, and the Security Council in particular, has a duty to take responsibility for the crisis in Mali without delay in order to restore a united, democratic and secular Mali. An operational concept for military intervention should be drawn up and adopted within the framework of a coalition that should include troops from ECOWAS member States as well as from the countries involved and from other African countries wishing to take part. Such an operation should receive the firm and determined support of the friends of Mali and Africa among the great Powers. It should be carried out through a Security Council resolution in a framework based on

the current efforts of ECOWAS but better coordinated with and controlled by the African Union through its Peace and Security Council.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Titus Corlăţean, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Corlăţean (Romania) (*spoke in French*): The current session of the General Assembly gives us a complete picture of today's world with all its challenges and opportunities. We can also glimpse various paths opening up before us to help us meet the needs of humankind and of nations.

I would like to focus on the three main areas of activity of the United Nations — peace and security; development; and human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In our approach we believe that the realities of the last decade have confirmed the profound and complex interdependence that exists between these areas. There is no peace and security without development and respect for human rights and democracy. Development is a catalyst for democracy and respect for human rights, and, at the same time, an essential factor for peace and security. In their turn, respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law strengthen development and create the conditions for lasting peace and security.

(*spoke in English*)

New situations of internal instability, civil strife and insecurity, with spillover effects, have arisen in the Middle East and other regions. It is regrettable that the new session of the Assembly is beginning in the shadow of the sorrow over the recent events in Benghazi. Attacks on diplomatic representatives are unacceptable for any reason. Diplomats are bridges between cultures, links among nations. Their inviolability is part of ancient custom. I strongly condemn the attacks and offer my sincere condolences to the families of the victims. The perpetrators must be brought to justice through a fair and equitable trial. At the same time, the ideals of democracy must be preserved. Stability and the rule of law should be the future pillars of society in Libya and elsewhere. We are firmly committed to supporting the efforts of the international community to consolidate stability and security, tolerance and religious understanding.

Throughout 2012 we have been confronted with the dire effects of the crisis in Syria, where human rights violations are now rampant. The Syrian Government must comply with its international commitments and obligations relating to human rights. Justice must be done in all cases of violations of human rights and all those who are guilty must be permitted a fair trial, even if it was not something they allowed their victims. Romania has stated throughout that it is imperative that the international community curb the escalating violence in Syria; and of course we favour a political solution.

In that regard, I would like to voice our firm support for the mission of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi in his new capacity as Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. We were also a wholehearted supporter of the full implementation of the Joint Special Envoy's six-point plan for Syria and, similarly, gave full and direct support to the activitiees of the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. In that context, I would like to remind the Assembly that Romanian monitors were part of its structure. I strongly believe that the only future for Syria must be an inclusive one for all Syrians, irrespective of religion or ethnic group. Any other option would be nothing less than a nightmare.

The time has come for a more structured response on the part of the United Nations, based on a consensus approach by the Security Council. Obviously, we cannot and should not allow violence to prevail when people in Syria rely on our capacity to offer stability and predictability and when regional stability and security are at stake.

Recent developments in the area of peace and security, at both the global and regional levels, do not offer many reasons for optimism. The year 2012 has seen limited progress with the Middle East peace process. The expectations raised by the statement of the Quartet for the Middle East on 23 September 2011 will remain unfulfilled as long as direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are not resumed.

Romania is a strong supporter of all efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We support all the initiatives of the Quartet and the full implementation of the road map's vision of two States, Israeli and Palestinian, living side by side in peace and security. We are also concerned about the lack of progress in finding negotiated solutions to protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region, such as those in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh and that in Georgia involving Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We

must all keep our attention focused on these unsettled situations. Meanwhile, we express our satisfaction with the efforts carried out over the past 12 months by the special representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Over the past year, the Security Council reacted promptly to new crises by adopting resolutions aimed at preventing the escalation of conflict or calling for the re-establishment of constitutional order or for efforts by all the parties involved to find negotiated solutions to new problems. The resolutions adopted have not always met expectations. In spite of the fact that the mandates of several United Nations peacekeeping missions were extended, little progress was made.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, through a joint innovative and intellectual effort, the conceptual approach has been enlarged to include human security, the responsibility to protect, and mediation. There is still a long way to go before those concepts are operational. When the time comes, Romania stands ready to implement them.

New categories of participants must be included in our common endeavour. Beside Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, parliaments and local communities are already acting to identify optimal solutions. Based on my previous experience as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, I consider that the role of parliaments as elected bodies could be increased in prevention activities or in efforts to settle existing conflicts. In that respect, cooperation and interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in peacebuilding efforts is highly relevant.

Over the past 15 years, my country has taken a keen interest in, and offered important contributions to, civilian and military missions under United Nations mandates. Today Romania is honoured and proud to have contributed in a consistent way to various United Nations operations. I pay my deepest respect to the men and women of Romania who have lost or risked their lives in conflict areas, as well as to all the military, police, gendarmes and civilian personnel serving all over the world to bring peace and security under the flag of the United Nations.

As I have already mentioned, development is equally a major area of interest, action and cooperation within the United Nations. One area where we could find solutions within the United Nations framework is improving the functioning of the banking and financial systems and institutions. National and international banking and financial institutions should become ever greater partners for Governments — a part of the solution to the economic crises confronting countries and regions.

Young people are the future of our nations and of our world. The United Nations has, in the past, takem up the problems facing younger generations, including through programmes of action adopted by the General Assembly. The time has come to revisit this area of interest to assess the achievements as well as the steps to be taken in order to meet the current expectations and needs of youth.

We should reconsider from a broader perspective the vital role of the education sector in providing support, especially but not exclusively, to young people. Such support should include universal access for younger generations to education; professional training allowing rapid and efficient integration into the labour market; and participation in, and contribution to, the shaping of future societies in all the countries, especially in those in transition.

For many years now, water has been a major concern as climate change affects its availability in all regions. Water, our planet's most precious resource, must not be allowed to become our most disputed resource and a source of bitter conflict.

Our attention should be focused on the follow-up to and implementation of the decisions recently adopted by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Relevant resolutions on enhancement of the institutional framework for sustainable development, agreement on sustainable development goals, and determination of certain financial aspects of the achievement of those goals are expected by all of us.

(*spoke in French*)

I should like to share some thoughts relating to the area of human rights, which is of growing relevance for our cooperation in the framework of the United Nations. International cooperation and discussions promoting human rights received renewed momentum with the establishment of the Human Rights Council. As an elected member of the Council since it began its work, Romania has contributed to the development

and adoption of its working methods, based on a more analytical approach as well as on in-depth cooperation and interactive dialogue with Member States. The main objective of the Romanian presidency of the Human Rights Council in 2007 was to strengthen and more actively promote human rights at the global level. We believe that the universal periodic review is an appropriate instrument for implementing the international protection of human rights in all its aspects. It can also respond to new human rights challenges, such as those posed by the Internet.

This spring in Geneva, Romania, together with Morocco, Norway, Peru, Qatar and Tunisia, promoted a draft resolution entitled "Human rights, democracy and the rule of law", which was sponsored by 124 countries from all regional groups. The broad support for the resolution, and the large number of Member States that supported its adoption by the Council, confirms the interest of Member States in this subject. We saw a broad recognition of the close interlinkage of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We would like to see in the near future the same approach taken by the General Assembly in the form of a similar resolution. In that respect, Romania is ready to set to work and to act together with other interested Member States.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to the principles and values promoted and constantly enhanced by the United Nations. We recognize that there is no alternative to the framework of cooperation offered by the United Nations system, which aims to resolve the complex and interrelated problems of our day. Reforming and adapting the system to the new realities of the world depends entirely upon us as Member States. It depends on our political will as political leaders. By doing so, we will meet the expectations of our peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Duncan (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who was not able to be here today, wishes me to express, on behalf of the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I would like to assure Mr.Jeremić of the full support of the Ivorian delegation for the success of his mandate. I would also like to convey to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, my delegation's satisfaction with the work undertaken and the encouraging results achieved under his presidency. His commitment to our common cause has allowed the Organization to fully play the role conferred upon it by the United Nations Charter. I wish to reiterate to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon my sincere thanks for his determined commitment and for his persistent quest for peace throughout the world. I reiterate to him once again the infinite gratitude of my President and the entire nation for his unfailing commitment to Côte d'Ivoire. Through the Secretary-General, I would like to pay tribute to all the civil and military personnel of the United Nations for their tireless efforts on behalf of peace and security.

The theme chosen for this session, "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", follows on from the theme of the previous session. In particular, it reflects the essence of the ideals of the San Francisco Conference, which led to the birth of the Organization. The purposes ascribed to the United Nations in its Charter can be summarized by the triptych of peace, liberty and development. To achieve those Charter purposes, the founding fathers of the Organization established a system of collective security on the basis of two major principles: the prohibition of recourse to the use of force in international relations and the obligation to settle disputes peacefully.

Now more than ever, we must enhance our collective security system and ensure that it has all the necessary resources to be effective. For his part, the President of Côte d'Ivoire is committed to strictly following a policy of peace and dialogue. These are principles that were enshrined as cardinal virtues, through trial by fire, by the late President, Mr. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who won a place in the history of Côte d'Ivoire, and indeed of the African continent, through his pragmatic approach to the settlement of conflict through dialogue.

For that reason, President Allassane Ouattara spares no efforts in seeking lasting solutions, both nationally in the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, and regionally, especially with regard to the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. Indeed, the security of West Africa is seriously challenged by military and political crises orchestrated by military, rebel or terrorist movements, particularly in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has always promoted the path of negotiation highlighted by the theme of this session, is working tirelessly to ensure a positive outcome to those crises and to ensure the restoration of constitutional order and democracy in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. While the situation has considerably improved in Guinea-Bissau, the one in Mali continues to be of major concern. Rebel movements linked to terrorist networks continue to occupy the main towns in the north of that country, which they are now pillaging and destroying with total impunity.

Determined to put an end to this abusive occupation of the north of Mali, ECOWAS plans to deploy a military force at the request of the Government of Mali to help the Malian army efficiently fulfil its sovereign mission of defending the territorial integrity of the country. The establishment and deployment of such a force requires major support from the African Union, the United Nations and all development partners. Indeed, the presence of groups with links to terrorists in northern Mali is a genuine threat, which could lead, if nothing is done, to the implosion of the entire West African region and the Sahel.

When we look at the non-State players involved in the current conflicts in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, particularly the terrorist networks and armed groups linked to transnational crime and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, we note how incomplete the current instruments for resolving these crises are, based as they are on negotiation and mediation. Today, there is no questioning the fact that the resurgence of terrorism in the Sahel region in general and in northern Mali in particular has created a sanctuary, a lawless zone. Western Africa faces other dangerous threats to the security of not only the region itself but also other regions, perhaps even Europe.

Eradicating these problems requires concerted and diligent action by ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. I am pleased to note the creation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, which is financed and hosted by Saudi Arabia. I also welcome the proposal made by the Secretary-General to appoint a United Nations counter-terrorism coordinator, and I would like to assure him of Côte d'Ivoire's full support.

Transnational crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the destruction of the environment are threats to the world in general and to Africa in particular. The International Maritime Organization, in its 2010 annual report, quite rightly said that the West African coast is one of the six main centres of piracy in the world. Responsibility for the measures to be taken to deal with these scourges lies first and foremost with the States of the subregion and the principal subregional organizations.

In that regard, I welcome the fact that the forty-first ECOWAS Summit, held in Yamoussoukro on 28 and 29 June, decided to convene a joint summit of West African and Central African States to take joint measures on piracy and organized transnational crime in the Gulf of Guinea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2039 (2012).

However, despite the goodwill of the countries of the subregion, they cannot, on their own, deal with the threats facing maritime security. My country welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to facilitate the organization of a summit of heads of State of the region to enable them to draw up a regional strategy to combat maritime piracy, together with the African Union.

Côte d'Ivoire, like many other African and non-African States, sincerely hopes that the Organization will be able to adopt in the near future a legally binding arms trade treaty, following the efforts made by all parties to reach a consensus. The international community must not lose the historic opportunity it has to better regulate, if not outright prohibit, a trade that causes 500,000 deaths each year and that is the main cause of violations of human rights and the destabilization of our States, as well as worsening conditions for our people, and, above all, poses a constant threat to regional and international peace and security. With respect to the links between economic development and the environment, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in June in Rio de Janeiro, shows what we can accomplish when we work together to build a better world for current generations and those to come. The combined crises in food, energy and the environment threaten the peace and security of all humankind. Yet we have the means to achieve a world free of famine and hunger. It is within our capabilities.

Allow me to stress that, with respect to the international system, Côte d'Ivoire urges all delegations, as we take up the eighth round of intergovernmental negotiations concerning the reform of the Security Council, to show flexibility and a spirit of compromise.

It is important to act quickly, because the composition of the Council is the keystone of our collective security system, and in that light its composition should be designed to maximize efficiency.

In order for the Security Council to be truly effective in its decisions, since it devotes two-thirds of its time to the African continent, we consider it more critical than ever for Africa to hold a permanent seat with the right of veto, in accordance with the recommendations defined in the Ezulwini Consensus. Taking duly into account the wishes of African heads of State and Government, the reform of the Security Council could represent a historical opportunity that the international community should seize in order to repair an anomaly in international relations. With that in mind, I hope that the forthcoming negotiations on Security Council reform will be crowned with success, yielding a Council that truly represents the realities of our shared history and our contemporary world.

I would like now to make some remarks about the situation in my country. Thanks to the most valuable support of the international community, especially the United Nations, Côte d'Ivoire has emerged from the military and political crisis that rocked the foundations of its economic and social development for nearly a decade. Resolutely committed to the path of post-conflict reconstruction, and with the aim of national cohesion, Côte d'Ivoire has made considerable progress in the political, economic, social, security and humanitarian spheres since 21 May 2011, the official date on which President Ouattara assumed the presidency of the Republic. Those results were made possible by the determination of the Ivorian Government to implement the three central priorities defined by the President when he took office.

First, on security and stability, significant joint efforts by the Government and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire lead to improvements in the situation, even in the west of the country, which has been the most problematic area.

Secondly, national reconciliation has been effected through the National Commission for Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation, which has been serving as the standing body for maintaining political dialogue.

Reconstruction and economic renewal are already off to a good start, with an estimated growth of more than 8 per cent in the gross national product for 2012. The economic situation has greatly improved, thanks to the support of our development partners, especially after we met the goals of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in June.

The resulting drop in our foreign debt and the adoption of our national development plan for the period 2012-2015 allow Côte d'Ivoire to hope that we can reach the double-digit economic growth rate necessary for our country to become an emerging country by 2020, as envisioned by President Ouattara.

Before concluding, I would like to say that Côte d'Ivoire notes that the President of the General Assembly at the previous session opened an informal interactive dialogue, at the level of the United Nations, on the issue of the responsibility to protect. In the aftermath of that useful forum and in the light of the lessons learned, Côte d'Ivoire, following the example of the Secretary-General, believes that the principle of the responsibility to protect has achieved sufficient maturity and that what remains to be done now is to implement it.

On that basis, the Economic Community of West African States and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect jointly held a regional forum in Abuja devoted to that concept. A similar meeting is scheduled to take place in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of this year.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the gratitude of President Ouattara, his Government and the Ivorian people to the United Nations and the entire international community for their commitment to peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire. That constitutes to be the precondition for development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, Minister for External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Moukoko Mbonjo (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I speak on behalf of Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, who has had to remain in Cameroon owing to painful circumstances. He asked me to read the following statement.

> "Allow me, first of all, to warmly congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. The experience he brings as former head of the diplomatic corps of his country leads me to believe that he, like his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, will lead the discussions with the requisite agility and talent. I would also like to

express to Mr. Al-Nasser my country's appreciation for his action as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

"Finally, I would like thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his devotion to serving the ideals of the Organization.

"This has been an active year for the Organization. We have held major meetings to discuss the important questions of the day and examined the most appropriate course of action to address them. Allow me to return to two of them.

"First of all, there is Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in June 2012 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the historic Earth Summit. The meeting enabled us to define the future we want to leave our children.

"I am pleased that the vision adopted at the end of the meeting recognizes the need to further incorporate at all levels of activities the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. If we want to leave a liveable world to future generations, the green economy seems the most effective way of ensuring that development meets the needs of populations while at the same time preserving the environment.

"For our part, Cameroon has already begun actions in that respect. We intend to work further to preserve our natural capital and to seek low-carbon solutions, as well as to promote production and consumption patterns that are sustainable.

"In our view, progress towards the green economy must be gradual and enjoy the support of the international community. In that respect, the document adopted at the end of the Rio Conference committed the international community to upholding the many obligations that had been undertaken with respect to Africa in terms of sustainable development, while ensuring, inter alia, appropriate technology transfer. The international financial institutions and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) are called upon to strengthen their activities to that end. That is a significant step forward.

"The second important meeting that we should note is the thirteenth quadrennial session held by UNCTAD in Doha, Qatar. Less commented upon by the media than the Rio meeting, that session aimed to curb the excesses of globalization and to refocus it on development. Globalization, because of what it has brought to the development of trade, economic and technological progress and the rapprochement of cultures, can be considered a positive phenomenon. The fact remains, however, that because of poor management and poor regulation, it was unable to prevent economic crises and relegated problems of underdevelopment to the backburner. UNCTAD, after the Doha meeting, was reinforced in its role in terms of trade and development, which is something to be welcomed.

"Since 2008, we have seen a slowdown in global economic activity. Industrialized countries, be they European Union or the United States or Japan, have, to varying degrees, been experiencing serious difficulties — slower growth or even recession, increased debt and public deficits, imbalances in foreign trade, and so on. Emerging countries themselves, which had seen high growth rates, have been experiencing a slowdown as well. As to developing countries, even if they continue to make moderate progress, they fear the effects of a crash of the global economy and a possible contagion.

"A few moments ago I said that globalization, even if it does have some positive aspects, has not achieved its main objective, that is, ensuring the harmonious functioning of the global economy and global finance while taking into account the interests of all concerned parties. That relative failure has revealed an urgent need for regulation. Right now it is hard to see how and when that need can be met.

"Major forums, such as the Group of 20, of which industrialized countries make up the majority, and the World Trade Organization have, for their part, discussed several times the question of the global economy and outlined solutions that could re-establish an overall balance. But it has to be said that, given the scale of the task, the lack of available resources and the difficulties that major countries themselves are having to face, the discussions have not always been followed by action. From that standpoint, the international community seems to be going through a period of doubt and concern. Every one of us is aware that urgent and large-scale action is required, but, preoccupied with our own

problems, we seem to be in a state of paralysis and unable to take the decisions that need to be taken.

"The obvious risk is one of a return to protectionism — a temptation that is already evident. If we believe the signs, that could only bring temporary respite and in time could exacerbate the recession. African countries, and Cameroon in particular, which have undergone a long crisis marked by declines in gross domestic product, the harsh discipline of structural adjustment plans and the worsening of social hardship, are in a good position to evaluate the consequences of a deterioration of the economy. That is why they place their hopes in a broad consultation with a view to the comprehensive regulation of economic and financial flows that would take into account the situation of the different categories of countries and provide opportunities for international solidarity to play a role.

"For its part, Cameroon has drawn lessons from the current situation. Back on its feet, thanks to the sacrifices of its population and relieved of the weight of their debt by external partners, the economy of Cameroon is now focused on taking advantage of its natural resources. Well endowed by nature, my country intends to develop modern agriculture in order to consolidate its food self-sufficiency and encourage exports. Also, aware that its industrialization requires the availability of sufficient energy, we have set in motion a programme to exploit our vast hydroelectric potential. Finally, several mining projects, together with the building of adequate road transport and port infrastructure, are under way. We hope to make progress on the road to development and the improvement of the living conditions of our population.

"I would now like to express my appreciation for the President's choice of theme for the general debate, namely, 'Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means'. That subject follows on from last year's theme and enables us to revisit the Charter of the United Nations and to remind ourselves of the values that it promotes and that should guide our actions.

"The theme recalls recalls the fundamental principles of the Organization, which are, inter alia, the maintenance of international peace and security through the adoption of effective collective measures and the settlement by peaceful means of disputes which could lead to a breakdown of peace, in accordance with the principles of justice and international law. That reminder is not without value at the present moment, when tensions persist in the Sahel, especially in Mali, when the Sudan and South Sudan struggle to normalize relations, and when Syria is ravaged by internal conflict. Those tensions highlight the risk of force being used to resolve differences.

"The use of force can be justified in some cases, such as to respond to international terrorism, violations of human rights and democracy, threats to the security of persons or violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. However, it is clear that, before resorting to that extreme, peaceful means must first be used to resolve disputes, so as to avoid setting off a vicious circle of violence and retaliation. Far be it from me to indulge in utopianism. There are situations when military intervention is perhaps inevitable. But it is our responsibility to reduce to the minimum the likelihood of military action by taking a maximum of precautions. In any case, clearly the preferred way to settle disputes is still through prevention and negotiation.

"For the greater part of international public opinion, the United Nations embodies the noblest human values and the hope for a future in keeping with the ideals of peace, security and development, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Let us strive to keep that hope from being yet again betrayed."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Antoine Gambi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Gambi (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): It is a genuine honour and pleasure for me to take the floor in the General Assembly Hall to report on the great interest that the Central African Republic takes in the major international issues of concern to everyone here.

However, before doing so, I would like, on behalf of my whole delegation, to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Jeremić on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session

and to assure him of our full cooperation in his noble and demanding work. I would also like to commend the excellent work done under the presidency of Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser during the sixty-sixth session. I wholeheartedly express my deepest thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the particular attention he focuses on our post-conflict country, where the quest to achieve and build peace remains a major challenge on the road to reconstruction and development. I also commend his tireless efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to consolidate ever more firmly the moral authority of the Organization.

Before conveying our assessments and perspectives on the main recurring themes of the general debate, which constitute a litany of global concerns, let me first say that my country welcomes the initiative in convening at the outset of the current session the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels. That is an issue of critical importance, considering that the rule of law itself is being harshly put to the test all over the world. All States and all international institutions should strive to promote the rule of law at both the national and the international levels. Strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions is of the utmost importance, because they represent the guardians of sovereignty and peaceful coexistence.

The real battle at the national and international levels is to enforce respect for the rule of law wherever chaos prevails. Many challenges remain in maintaining the rule of law. Hotspots persist and old conflicts erupt anew in many parts of the world, causing tragedy and threatening to unravel the rule of law.

In Africa the rule of law is particularly at risk of breaking down, threatened by tensions, disputes and conflicts in a number of high-tension areas, especially Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. The same applies to other crises all over the world, carrying untold risk to governance and stability within countries, not to mention to international relations.

The Government of the Central African Republic goes to great lengths to support efforts to promote the rule of law, justice and transparency through its management of the national institutions charged with enforcing the rule of law. Without peace and stability at the global and regional levels, national security and stability are out of the question, and therefore so is the rule of law.

All around the globe we hear cries for freedom and democracy. Since 1989 the world has been in a period of change that has sparked much political fire in Africa.

With the international transformations of the 1990s, many African States, including the Central African Republic, have begun to move towards democratizing their political systems. Democracy, good governance and human rights are interdependent. We can say that there can be no rule of law unless those values are respected, both by Governments and the governed. The support and programmes designed to respond to citizen's expectations must take those shared values into account, and the Government of the Central African Republic strives to achieve that every day. The Central African Republic has returned to democratic practices, and there is no question that through the evolving democratic process efforts have been made to improve the management of public affairs politically, economically and socially. But we must admit that much remains to be done, and it is something that the international community must commit to collectively.

My country's commitment to human rights has been demonstrated, not only through its full accession to many if not almost all, of the relevant international and regional instruments, but also in practice, through its encouragement of those rights. Under the leadership of General François Bozizé, President of the Republic and Head of State, we adopted a new Constitution on 27 December 2004. The Constitution enshrines the principles of good governance, maintains the rule of law and respect for human rights, and broadens the scope of individual and collective liberties. The Constitution also provides for recognition of the principle that international conventions ratified by the Central African Republic take precedence over national legislation, thus encouraging the harmonization of our laws with our international commitments.

In expressing its political will within the framework of the defence of civic and political rights protected by the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, the Central African Republic implements the provisions of that Charter, which have been incorporated into its laws. The Government is also making efforts to protect and encourage vulnerable groups, such as women and children and minorities, through social policies that benefit them.

We are aware that the press is the fourth estate in every democracy. In order to guarantee the exercise of the freedom of the press in the Central African Republic, the Government enacted, on 22 February 2005, Ordinance No. 05002, concerning freedom of communication, which relaxes the laws concerning press offences, notably by replacing prison terms with ordinary fines for any contravention of the laws in question.

In an effort to avoid post-electoral political crises, the Government, the political parties — both the majority and the opposition parties — trade unions and civil society are currently reviewing the electoral code in order to correct dysfunctional areas that were noted during the election campaigns of January 2011. The work being done will enable Central African political actors to undertake reforms and essential improvements for the next electoral cycle in a spirit of dialogue and consensus.

The state of the world should make us aware of the urgent need to strengthen multilateralism in order to avoid the collective disaster we face, if we do not speedily come up with appropriate and agreed-on solutions to our global problems. The fundamental goals of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to be held hostage to the policy of the double standard, along with the discriminatory practices and lack of respect for commitments undertaken on the part of certain nuclear Powers.

The fight against terrorism and violations of human rights around the world, which is approached selectively, and the biased implementation of international humanitarian law has given rise to legitimate doubts as to whether those noble causes are being exploited for political ends. That calls for action by the Organization. Issues of climate change and the protection of the natural world also demand a changed approach that takes into account the aspirations of all peoples. Floods and energy and drought-induced food crises continue in some parts of the world, and such crucial issues require greater mobilization on the part of the international community.

This year we will renew the debate on the central role of the United Nations system, while putting particular emphasis on the global governance that it embodies. The Organization remains the keystone of the new world order and the conscience of humankind. That is why the need is greater than ever for a United Nations that can take on a more leading role in that global governance, a groundbreaking organization that will be at the forefront of actions promoting an inclusive framework and global and lasting solutions to all the crises that trouble our world and have direct repercussions for human rights.

Increasing multipolarization and economic globalization, the recent evolution of world economic governance and growing cooperation between emerging countries have all presented valuable development opportunities to many countries around the world. The United Nations is the most universal and representative intergovernmental organization with the greatest authority, and it is the most important platform for achieving multilateralism. Since its establishment it has played a huge and irreplaceable role in maintaining world peace, promoting shared development and strengthening international cooperation. In today's world its role must be reinforced, not weakened.

The Central African Republic will continue to support the essential and rational reform of the United Nations in line with the evolution of the international situation, in order to increase its authority and effectiveness, strengthen its capacity to deal with new threats and challenges and better implement the mandates entrusted to it by the Charter. Both the revitalization of the General Assembly and the necessary reform of the Security Council in order to meet the legitimate aspirations of developing countries, in particular in Africa, are certainly valid.

The issue of civilian resources needed in post-conflict situations takes us back to the Organization's initial purpose: to be a centre for the coordinated efforts of nations to maintain international peace and security through peaceful means. The Charter has given rise to two texts on the peaceful settlement of disputes: the General Assembly Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes of 1982 (resolution 37/10, annex) and the 1988 Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations Which May Threaten International Peace and Security and on the Role of the United Nations in this Field (resolution 43/51, annex). We could also mention resolution 47/120, entitled "An Agenda for Peace", drawn up following the summit meeting of the Security Council in January 1992 convened to establish a doctrine of preventive diplomacy in order to anticipate crises or to facilitate their settlement through the mechanisms of good

offices, mediators and special envoys of the Secretary-General supported by the Mediation Support Unit.

In that context, the Government of the Central African Republic welcomes the African Union's launching of the African Solidarity Initiative in July. Its aim is to mobilize contributions of all kinds in support of the various reconstruction phases in African countries emerging from conflict. Post-conflict reconstruction is complex and requires short-, medium- and long-term programmes to prevent violence from escalating and the reoccurrence of violent conflict and to strengthen and consolidate a lasting peace.

Under the presidency of President Bozizé, the Central African Republic, a post-conflict country that owes much to the virtues of dialogue, quickly noted the significance of such a tool in the prevention and settlement of national crises. In that regard, I would like to draw the international community's attention to the fact that the Central African Government has made the issue of mediation a priority concern in its work plan. To that end, it established the National Mediation Council.

We should perhaps go further in establishing civilian mediation bodies for the restoration of peace, whose members would be charged with visiting the warring parties in order to establish dialogue between them and to help them to settle their disputes through peaceful means.

The Central African Republic affirms that there can be no rule of law without respect for and the promotion of rights and freedoms, including that of religion, which should be practiced without extremism, the consequences of which often lead to a clash of civilizations. Regional and international meetings have taken place in the context of the dialogue of civilizations. However, violence and intolerance continue to affect social relations.

This is the place to express to the American people the sincere condolences of the Central African Government over the attacks on the United States consulate in Benghazi, which led to the death of innocent victims.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I now call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who wishes to speak in exercise the right of reply.

I would like to remind members of the General Assembly that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Sahraei (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning, the Prime Minister of the friendly State of Kuwait referred in his statement to the three Iranian islands located in the Persian Gulf. In that regard, I would like to state the following.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its full sovereignty over the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf and categorically rejects any claim to the contrary. The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines that measures taken by Iranian officials regarding those islands have always been conducted on the basis of the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

My country has always pursued a policy of friendship and good-neighbourliness with all neighbouring countries. In that context, Iran stands ready to discuss the issue bilaterally with the relevant officials in the United Arab Emirates with a view to strengthening relations in various fields and, accordingly, to resolve any possible misunderstanding by the other party. As has been regularly reiterated, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iran regarding those islands are not negotiable.

In relation to the references made in the statements of a few delegations, the Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to stress that the only correct and historically and universally recognized name for the sea between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula is the Persian Gulf. Any use of fabricated or incomplete names for that body of water is therefore completely groundless and absolutely unacceptable and bears no legal, geographical or political value.

The meeting rose at 10.40 p.m.